



IN REAL LIFE by Ron Rocco

MY LIFE AND WORK IN 3D
DESIGN, THE VISUAL AND
PERFORMING ARTS

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Above: **Bail Out**, 2010 installation for Boffo, Brooklyn, N.Y.

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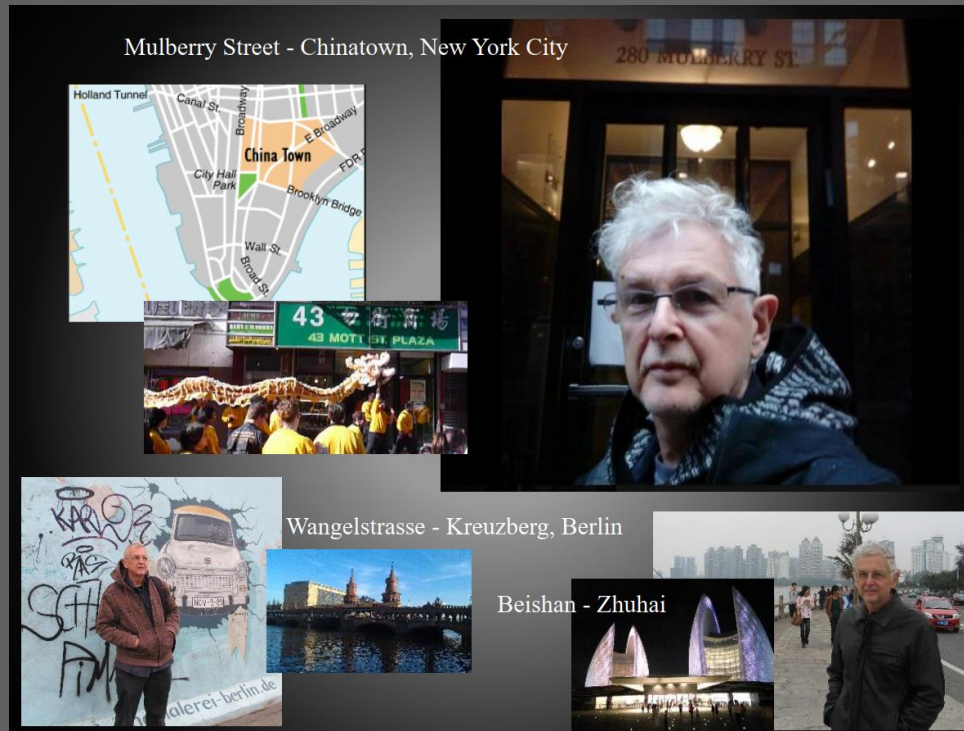
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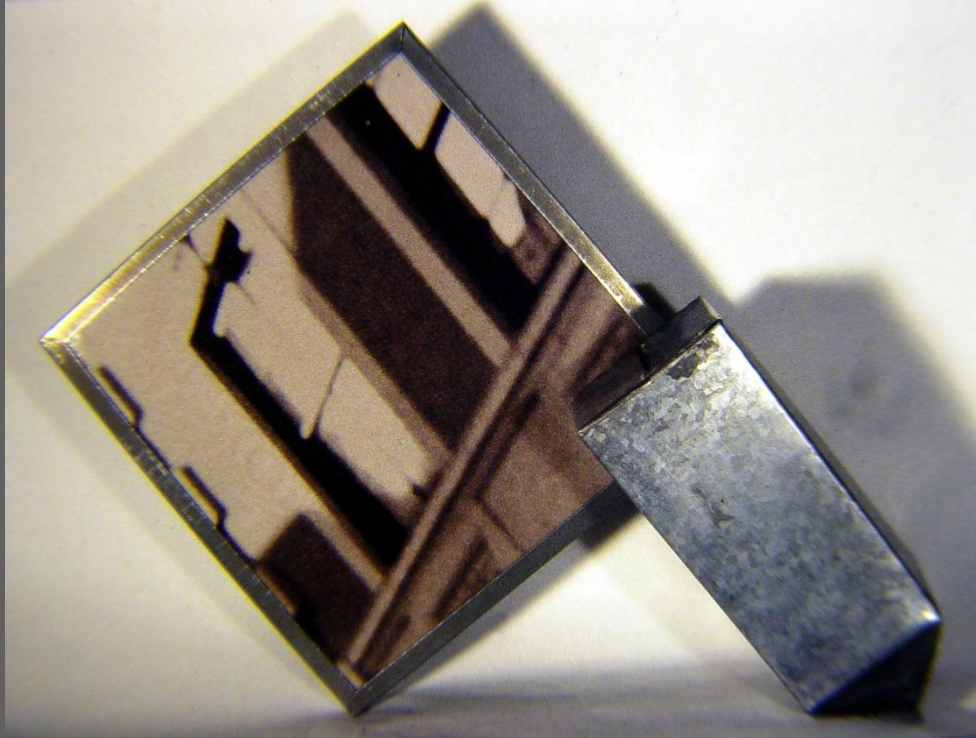


The neighborhood where I grew up in the 1960's, is an Italian-American enclave known as Arthur Avenue in the Bronx, in New York City. This was a low-income, working class neighborhood. There was a scrap metal yard next to my apartment building. I remember it well because it had one of the last remaining working horse carts in New York. Every morning the horse and driver would leave the yard to collect scrap metal and every evening the cart would return filled with the discarded materials of urban life. The odd pieces of metal, the old items scattered among the piles of debris instilled in me an early interest in working with materials. It gave me a sense of the latent potential of found objects to evoke memory and associations¹. At this time my interest was confined to making small collections of the more evocative pieces I would find in this my urban playground.

My formal study in the arts began at the State University of New York, College at Purchase, along with classmates like artists Jon Kessler, Polly Apfelbaum and Fred Wilson. We studied with the American sculptor, Tal Streeter, American photographer and musician John Cohen and learned printmaking with the Uruguayan-American printmaker Antonio Frasconi. These artists

¹ Wikipedia: Ron Rocco http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Rocco

INTRODUCTION: On reflection



Soliloquy 1999

made it clear that inspiration led the way to creation, that one need only to follow the light of interest to find a path.

My first reflections on the motivations behind an artist's desire to create are found in my diary entry of 1973, when I wrote about the inability to truly know the mind of another. In this contemplation of my lover, I spoke of the *"trap of the mind"* and pondered that *"I could never be in her mind and know that at the same moment she was equally in love."* I noted that although her actions and words spoke to me of her affection, I could never know for certain that the thoughts and feelings we 'shared' were in fact the same. In this speculation I saw the artist's motivation as an attempt to liberate oneself from this *"trap of the mind"* and attempt discovery of singleness, a oneness of entity. Not to know exactly what another is thinking, but to free you from your mind and set thought and feelings into another's mind through the senses. In this I felt an artist must be able to see areas of knowledge that are seemingly diverse. One needed to be an artist in relevance with his time. And at that time, I believed that one achieved this by employing, *"artistic economy through simplicity of detail."*

INTRODUCTION: On reflection

It was at Purchase that my first work in sculpture *Untitled 1*, was inspired by a memory I had as a young boy. My grandmother had died and at the wake, which occurred at her home in rural Pennsylvania there was one wreath of flowers unlike all the others. This bouquet was in the form of a Star and Crescent and it was this combination of shapes that launched me into my first sculptural undertaking in 1975. I guess I could call this strong connection between an event, my emotions and these shapes, the emotive power of form. There has been this strong connection between forms and feelings present as a driving force in many of my projects ever since.



Study for Untitled 1 1975

Untitled 1 1975



INTRODUCTION: On reflection



Progression 2001

Recently, the term “*confessional art*”² has been used to denote artists who included autobiographical elements in their work. The symbolism of French-American sculptor, Louise Bourgeois, the designated founder of confessional art, relies on knowledge of her biography, or so says Richard Dorment of London’s *The Telegraph* newspaper³. As defined in one article, “*Confessional art is a form of contemporary art that focuses on an intentional revelation of the private self. Confessional art encourages an intimate analysis of the artist’s, artist’s subjects’, or spectator’s confidential, and often controversial, experiences and emotions.*”

Certainly, as this term is coined, many of my later undertakings produced works with autobiographical references that would qualify as “*confessional art*”. Although I am put off by the Catholic connotations of the term, there is truth in the fact that many of my more significant art works adhere in part to this categorization.

My goal in this writing is to shine light onto the motivational forces at work in my oeuvre be they autobiographical, or inspired by external learning and to analyze my role in the contemporary landscape of artistic production. In this attempt

² Encyclopedia of Identity /Confessional Art, Ronald L. Jackson II & Michael A. Hogg. Pub: 2010
<http://knowledge.sagepub.com/view/identity/n45.xml>

³ The Telegraph / Louise Bourgeois invented confessional art by Richard Dorment. June 2010
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/7794168/Louise-Bourgeois-invented-confessional-art.html>



INTRODUCTION: On reflection

to understand my life's work in visual media and the performance arts, we must look at several threads; a search for simplicity of form, a desire to unleash the emotive power found in objects in referencing autobiographical subject matter, and the idea of a social role taken by the artist in contemporary society.

I used to worry that if I was not making art then I was wasting my time, doing nothing, being unproductive, wasting my talents. This as it may sound, was acquired guilt learned as a result of many factors, my Roman Catholic upbringing, the social dynamic that attempts to identify genius, work ethics and the social currents of the art scene in New York City, where I spent most of my life as a practitioner. It was this guilt that I would project onto myself with every idle period. What I've since come to discover is that the creative impulse, whatever it may be, and however it may manifest itself, is not unlike a natural spring. No matter how long the water is detained, dammed or diverted it must move on and will find a passageway to move on. There is no force on earth that can stop the water without releasing some of it to continue its passage. So, it is with the drive to create. Those idle periods, when I aided my community as the

Element 1986



Work IDs 1983-1993

INTRODUCTION: On reflection

president of the tenant's organization in the Lower East Side; my study of the martial arts; all my paid work at Cornell University, the Guggenheim Museum, Columbia University and elsewhere found a place in the inspirational landscape, which generated my art. If I begin by painting, move to 3 dimensional forms, electronic media, photography or architecture it all springs from the same source, all are tributaries from the same well. With that thought in mind I will proceed on a small journey through the story of my life and creative process. That process progresses today as I relax and continue with the enjoyment of the making⁴.

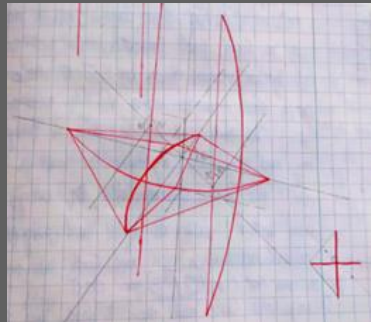
⁴ Author, Elizabeth Gilbert in her TED Talk entitled, "Your elusive creative genius" hints at this revelation in her retelling of a small moment of enlightenment overtaking musician, Tom Waits during a drive in Los Angeles.



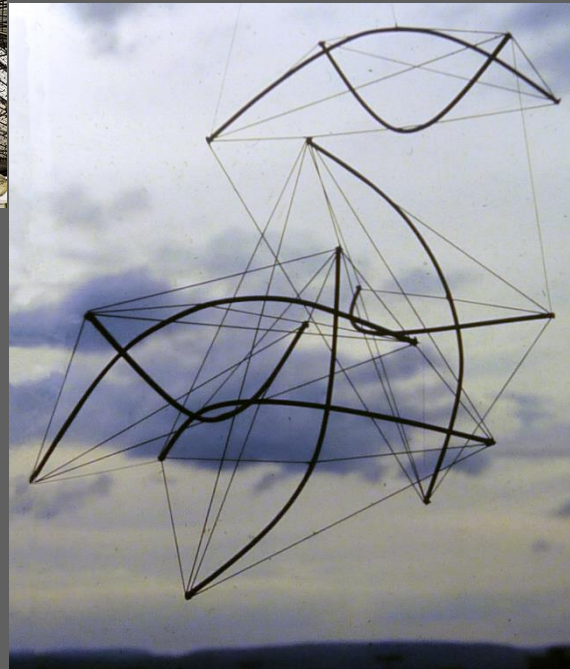
Domesticated Love 1 2002



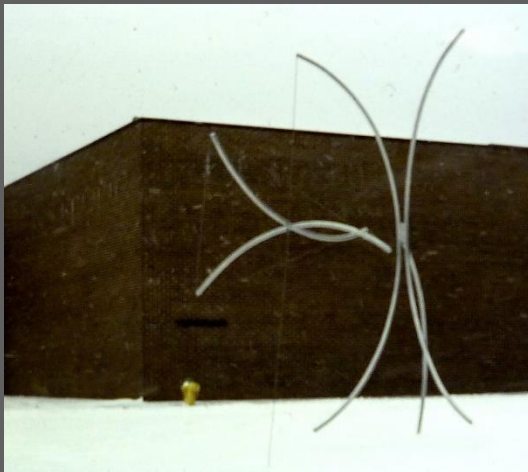
Structural detail of Frei Otto's Munich Olympic Stadium.



Study for Meketra 1978



For Lao Tsu my study of gravitational effects on falling elements.



Untitled 1 1975

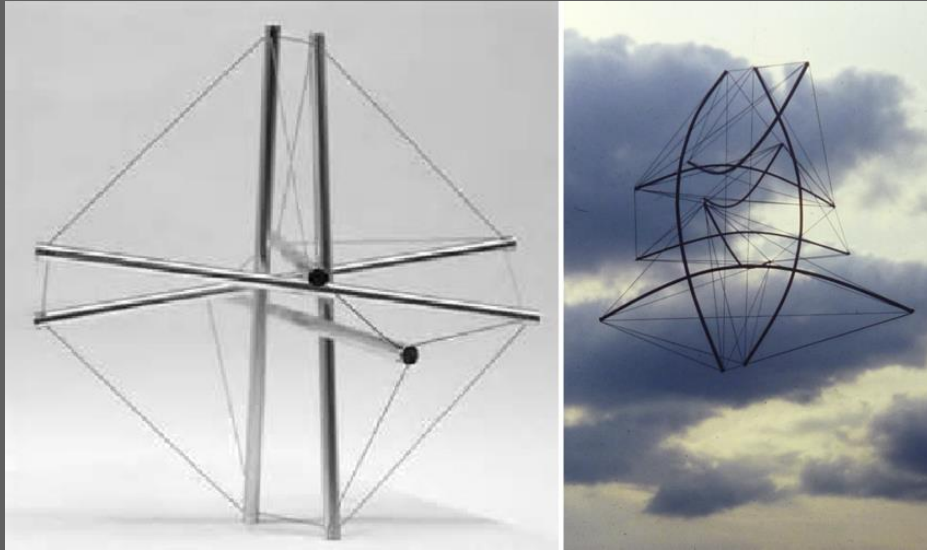
EARLY WORK IN SCULPTURE:

Balance and the nature of physical systems

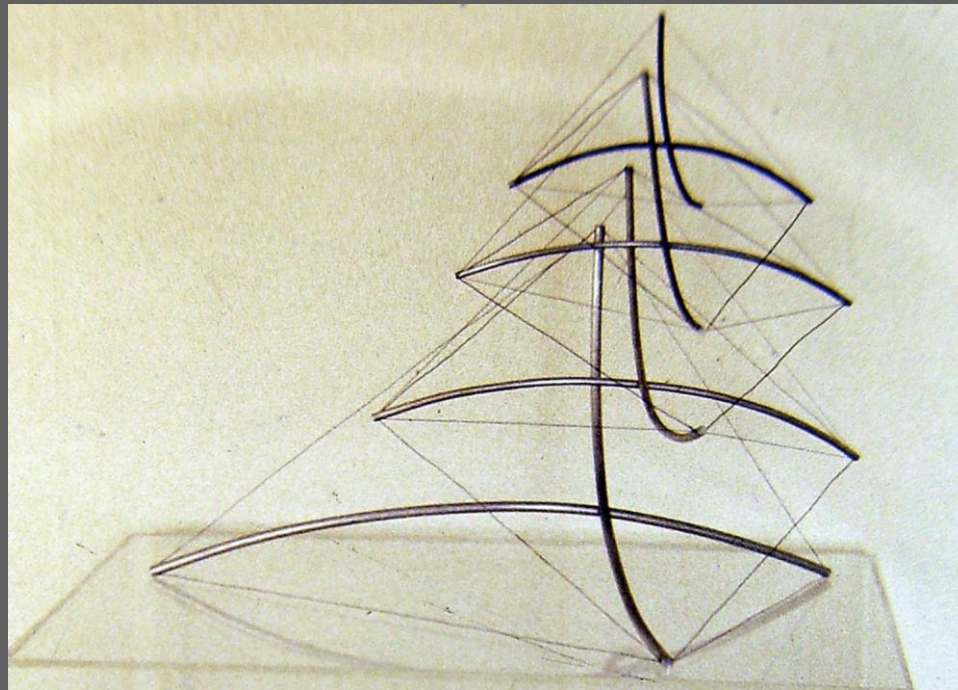
The work I finished in 1975, which took shape from a Star and Crescent bouquet, was named *Untitled 1*. It began as a small working model and was later constructed into a large 4-meter-tall structure. Eventually it was resident, on loan to the Roy R. Neuberger Museum in Purchase, New York.

What was special about this work was the structure of the star element. This is a shape known as a saddle-surface. It was a core element of the work of German architect Frei Otto, who had employed it in the design of the Munich Olympic stadium of 1972. Otto is considered a “pioneer in lightweight tensile and membrane construction”⁵ so the saddle-surface he utilizes is a membrane. My structure on the other hand is defined by arced tubes of steel held in place by a stainless-steel cable. The cable is in tension, which keeps the tubes compressed together. The structure of this object, being the result of a balance of physical forces, fascinated me and implied a larger variety of possible constructions that maintained a natural simplicity of form. Indeed, another American artist, Kenneth Snelson, a former student of American architect and systems theorist, Buckminster Fuller, employed similar structures, which he called tensegrities to explore dozens of sculptural potentialities.

⁵ AD Classics: Munich Olympic Stadium / Frei Otto & Gunther Behnisch
<http://www.archdaily.com/109136/ad-classics-munich-olympic-stadium-frei-otto-gunther-behnisch/>



A comparison of forms: Kenneth Snelson's *unit structure* / Ron Rocco's 1978 *Study for Meketra*



Osiris 1979

EARLY WORK IN SCULPTURE:

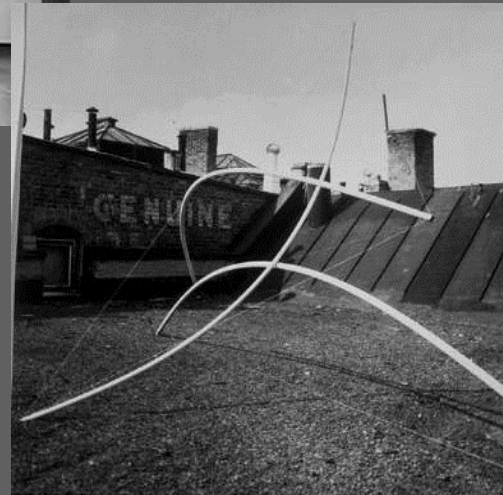
Balance and the nature of physical systems

It was this work, exploring variations of arc segments assembled into systems than included tension, compression and gravitational forces, held in equilibrium, which sustained me from 1975 to 1979 while living in Ithaca, New York. Like Snelson, I tried to bring together a series of physical forces that worked on the structure of an artwork. Assembling units that would create towers, or cascades of falling elements that because of their natural geometry would assume specific configurations, configurations that differed from those found in Snelson's work. For me the work embodied a natural calligraphy of physical forces written onto three dimensional spaces. During my later explorations within this system of elements, I found that even the remains of damaged works offered a window for exploration, in this case into the effects of destructive forces as they acted upon the tension-compression elements. This created the signature wreckage of a work entitled, *Osiris in Destruction*, which incorporated both the 'destroyed' structure and the intact artwork.

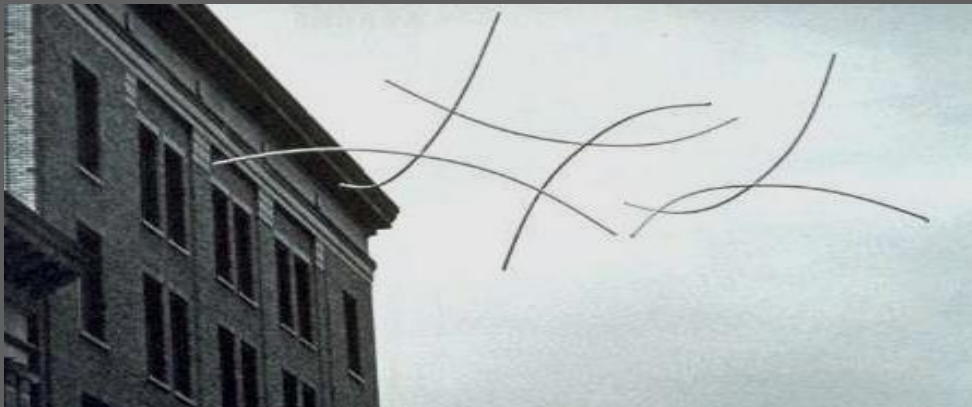
After graduating from Purchase I relocated to Ithaca, New York taking a position at the Material Science and Engineering laboratories of Cornell University. This was fertile ground for the



Meketra 1978 installed at the Herbert Johnson Museum



Genuine 1977



Altair 1977 over the Ithaca Commons as part of the first Ithaca Arts Festival, Ithaca NY

EARLY WORK IN SCULPTURE:

Balance and the nature of physical systems

development of my ideas and projects as it gave me access to extensive facilities and stores from which I could purchase specialized equipment and materials. At this time, science and engineering informed my work as a visual artist. This became apparent while working on my *Models for Large Sculpture* exhibition at the Arnot Art Museum in Elmira, New York in 1976. My work at Cornell introduced me to laser technology, along with other technologies, which could be used for my future projects. As a result, my first Helium-Neon laser was constructed there in 1978.

In Ithaca larger projects emerged with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, Expansion Arts Program and through my involvement with *Festival Ithaca*. Works like *Altair*, a matrix of arc segments and stainless-steel cable, occupying an area of 1200 cubic feet and suspended five stories above the city center in Ithaca, New York was a manifestation of this support. Another work *Meketra*, was enlarged with a commission from The Creative and Performing Arts Council of Cornell University, and exhibited at Cornell University's Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art in 1977.



Matrix 1976

EARLY WORK IN SCULPTURE:

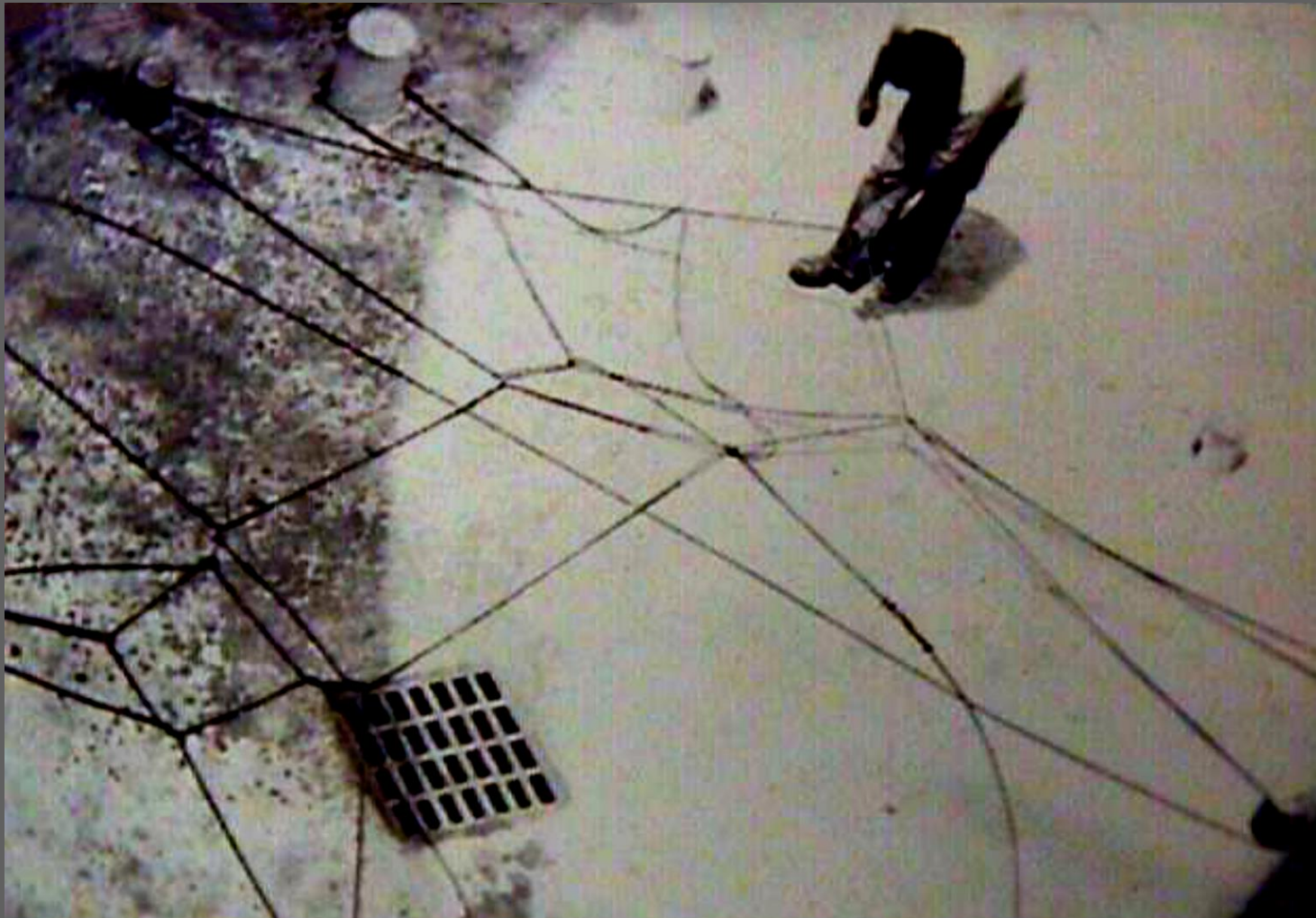
Balance and the nature of physical systems

There were two interesting developments that resulted from my *Altair* project. The first, a result of *Altair* being an element in the larger *Festival Ithaca* events, encouraged community involvement in its construction. So, the work was assembled with the help of visitors to the festival. This introduced the idea of interactive events to my work and thus performance, which seeded new research into tension systems that would lend themselves easily to manipulation. That research led me to string forms known since the beginning of the 20th Century by anthropologists studying traditional cultures around the world. In particular, forms taken from Inuit and Oceanic sources held the most promise, because of their use in the oral transmission of socially valuable information and references to shamanism.

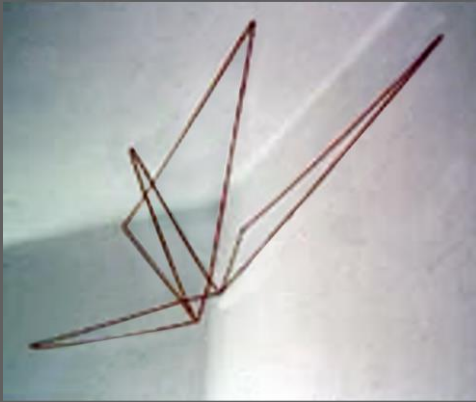


Taurus 1977

EARLY WORK IN SCULPTURE:
Balance and the nature of physical systems



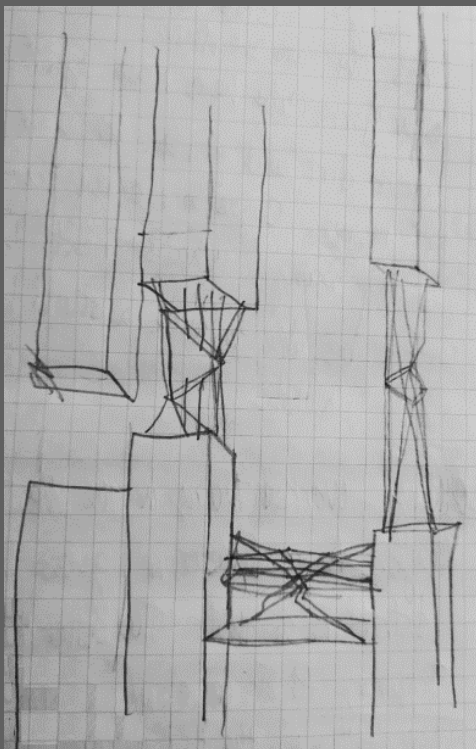
The artist weaving the string form: *Breast Bone and Ribs*



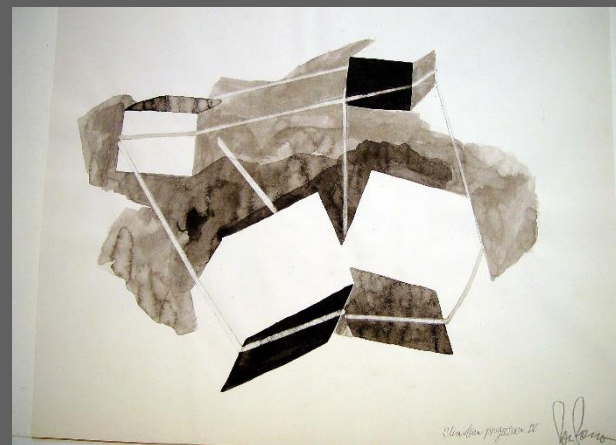
Installation at Lee Pope's Somers Gallery, 1979



My exhibition at Gallery Danielli Toronto, Canada 1979



String form studies 1979



Chinatown progression 1980

MAKING ART IN THE SOCIAL FORUM

Performance works

I began to focus on the idea of performance as an extension of sculpture, employing the fruit of my research into traditional string forms⁶. This work was undertaken with the support of my art dealer and patron Lee Pope, with my installation of string forms in her Westchester gallery and her Martha's Vineyard home. This work also appeared at my solo exhibition of 1979 in Toronto, Canada with my Canadian representative, Galerie Danielli. The Canadian installation documented one of several string forms derived from the oceanic figures. The form woven was a transitional figure in a series of eight related forms, one manifestation in this evolution.

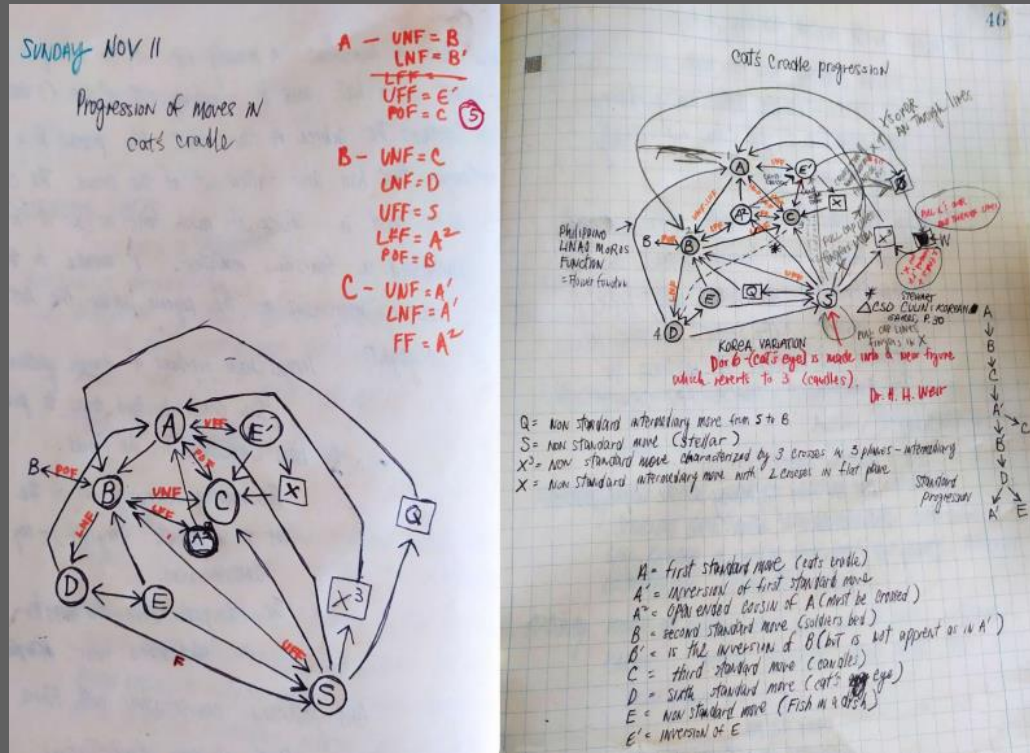
⁶ *String Figures and How to Make Them a Study of Cat's Cradle in Many Lands* by Caroline F. Jayne, Courier Dover Publications, 1962



Weaving string forms at the Guggenheim Museum 1983

MAKING ART IN THE SOCIAL FORUM

Performance works



Cat's Cradle studies 1979-80

My performance **Cat's Cradle Event**, presented at the Ithaca Festival in 1979, increased the role for interaction by visitors. During this celebration, participants were encouraged to join me within the confines of a large 200ft loop of rope. There we manipulated the rope, weaving it around our bodies to construct a large-scale version of the classic string figure known as Cat's Cradle.

As an extension of my work in tension generated sculptures, I saw the employment of string figures as an inroad to performance art. These string forms, in their traditional context possessed a social facet, communicating communal beliefs and ritual. I felt, they could easily be used in a contemporary social context as well.



Cat's Cradle studies

MAKING ART IN THE SOCIAL FORUM

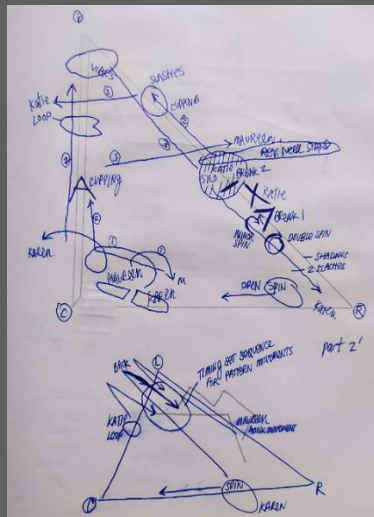
Performance works



Laser Sculpture /Dance 1981

Laser Sculpture /Dance, which premiered in 1981 in a Tribeca loft in New York City, was a further extension of these earlier interests and was reviewed by Jennifer Dunning in *The New York Times*. The review of May 26, 1981 stated, "The concert's most interesting aspect was its use of red pinpoint laser beams in the second of the three dances in the suite...here the dancers simply stepped over and through the triangle and rectangular box formed by the beams, which shot out from two walls and were bounced off refractory gadgets dotting the floor. At times, they stopped the beams with their bodies, much as children do in flashlight games, briefly spattering their cotton shirts with light or seeming to cup blood in their hands."

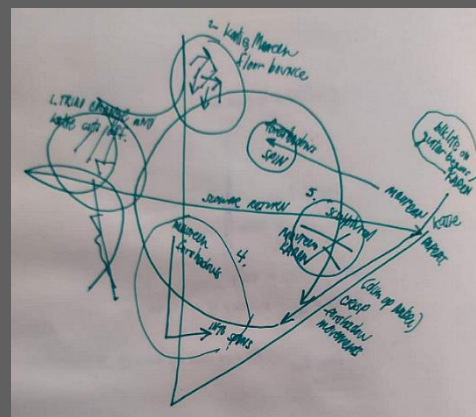
It introduced new elements such as the use of red Helium-Neon laser light as a linear pseudo-string along with the dance. The use of a laser was an effort to create a fluid medium in which to manipulate the perceived forms marked out in ribbons of light. It was also an effort to address the peculiar nature of light as both a wave form and particulate matter. In the months of 1981 during which I worked on the elements of the performance I wrote, "Our society, built as an edifice atop many substrata of primary and secondary, etc. layers of technological advancement, is inherently tenuous in its reliance on a hierarchy



Movement studies 1981



Laser Sculpture /Dance 1981



Movement studies 1981

MAKING ART IN THE SOCIAL FORUM

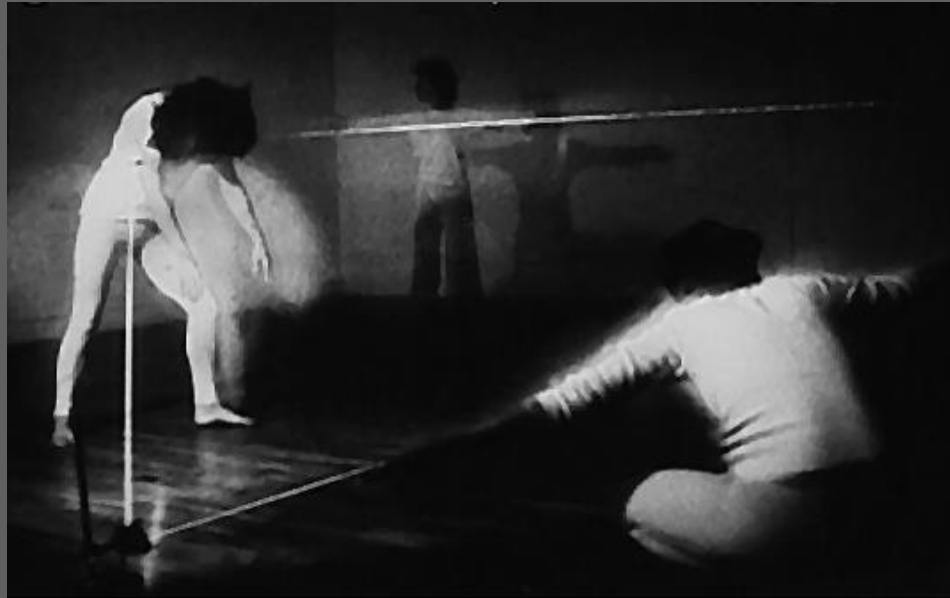
Performance works

of knowledge. The laser, which at this time is viewed as positioned at the relative summit of this technological hierarchy, becomes a choice symbol for this relationship. In an age of impending nuclear disaster, the tenuous nature of the man-made world becomes most conspicuous. For me now the ambiguous materiality of light reflects the nature of these times where there is no substance to grasp at."

The installation allowed the dancers to play with these qualities by treating the light as a material substance in the room at one moment and then transgressing its materiality, stopping it with their bodies, at another time in the performance. It was presented again at Cornell University's Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art in Ithaca, New York for their **Week of Performance Art** in 1981.

MAKING ART IN THE SOCIAL FORUM

Performance works

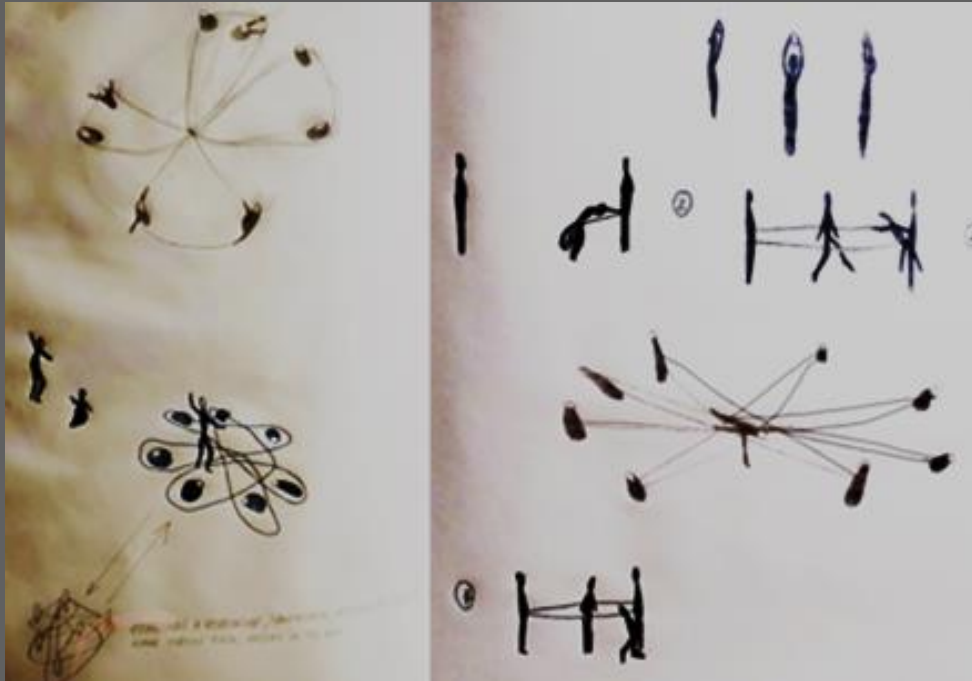


Laser Sculpture /Dance 1981

My 1981 press release for this performance stated: "**LASER SCULPTURE/DANCE** as conceived, as a dance and sculpture collaboration, employs a set environment of laser and artificially induced fog atmosphere containing reflective target points for the direction of the laser light into string-like patterns. Within the fog a geometric enclosure of laser light materializes slowly. The dancer explores the substance-like, or non-substance-like nature of this enclosure. The relationship of the dancer's movement and the workings of the laser system are of special interest in this work. The dancer's body intercepts the beam and terminates its complex pattern in an instant. The laser pattern can in turn be varied to a room-sized matrix that expands, or restricts the dancer's movement."

MAKING ART IN THE SOCIAL FORUM

Performance works



Rope form with dancers 1983

My performance of 1983 entitled, *A String form for Binding Nations*, presented at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, for a conference on *Traditional Cultures and Communications Technologies*, like my former work, *Cat's Cradle Event* encouraged visitors to the U.N. conference to join together and use their bodies to create a social sculptural matrix. At the United Nations performance we worked together with a 200ft. rope to collectively weave a traditional, Inuit string figure called, *Breast Bone and Ribs*. I would later employ this string form into other performances, as it opened a link for dialogue with my audience to present the idea of the artist as shaman.

MAKING ART IN THE SOCIAL FORUM

Performance works

Zaroff's Tale

In conducting research for my performance of *Zaroff's Tale*, presented in 1983 at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, I discovered that within traditional cultures the shaman was identified as one who could envision themselves beyond death, to see themselves devoid of flesh, in a skeletal form. This person thus presented him, or herself as one who could traverse the world of the dead and the living.

For this reason, *Breast Bone and Ribs*, a string figure know to us from the Topek Inuit of Alaska through the teachings of their Chief named Zaroff when he was visited by Danish anthropologists, seemed a powerful visual allusion to this idea of spiritual transformation. For that reason, I chose the weaving of this form as the dominant activity for my event, which I would name after Zaroff himself.



Zaroff's Tale 1983 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NYC, photo credits Myles Aronowitz.



Zaroff's Tale 1983 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NYC, photo credits Myles Aronowitz.

MAKING ART IN THE SOCIAL FORUM

Performance works



Zaroff's Tale 1983 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NYC, photo credits Myles Aronowitz.

At this time, it was Joseph Beuys's thoughts on shamanism which influenced me most, because like him I believed this door to spirituality could be used to point out the "*fatal character*"⁷ flaws of contemporary society.

In *Zaroff's Tale*, I proposed the artist assume the role of shaman. As such the artist-shaman, having knowledge of both the spirit world and corporeal reality could act as a guide. In the performance, this is done by staging a re-birth through the use of the string form. The rope generated form becoming the stepping stone to redefining ourselves and our society and thus coming back into balance with the natural world.

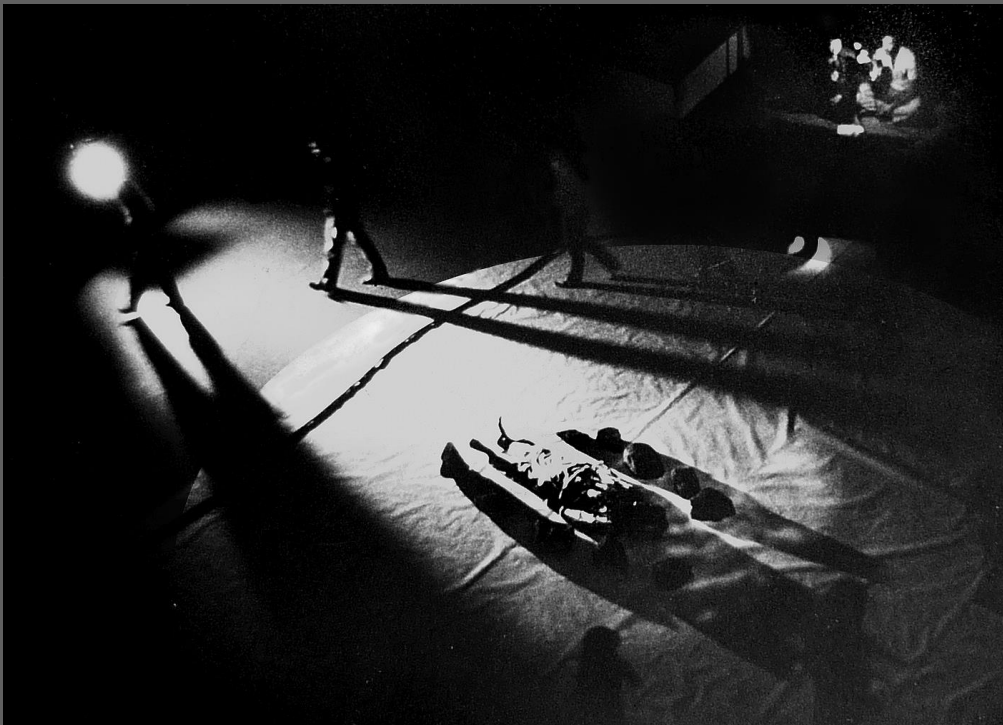
⁷ Wikipedia: Beuys http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Beuys

MAKING ART IN THE SOCIAL FORUM

Performance works

My statement of 1983 is as follows:

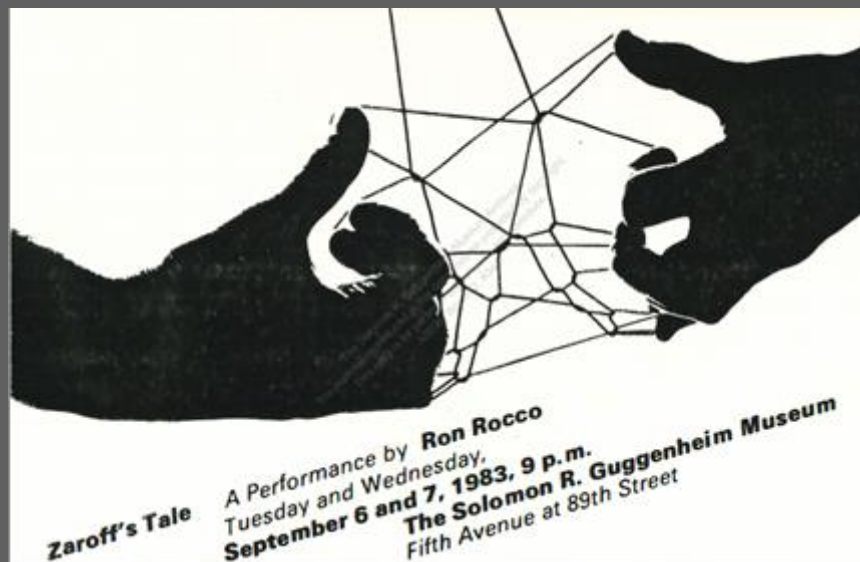
"The process of working with the hands with a loop of string is an art of prehistory. For the Topek Inuit of Alaska, of whom Zaroff was chief, it was a part of the fabric of social relations joining successive generations. In this tradition the string forms are part of a teaching mythology carrying the germ information for life in the arctic north. The existence of the game today is based on its durability in its role in this social matrix. I consider the string forms the signature of a dynasty of social sculptors. It embraces the meta-physical and extends our relationship to phenomena. Zaroff's Tale uses a 200 ft. rope and a variety of visual and audio media techniques to communicate the relationship between abstract string compositions and the teaching mythologies associated with them in the culture of the Topek Inuit. The relationships between visual form, physical action and social content are explored as an allegorical presentation of new relationships inherent in our own current and future technologies. I construct the string forms to be viewed not as a finished form, but as an art form taken out of a sentence of larger context, of many more transitions.



Zaroff's Tale 1983 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NYC, photo credit Myles Aronowitz



Zaroff's Tale 1983 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NYC Below: Event Invitation



MAKING ART IN THE SOCIAL FORUM

Performance works

In this manner the viewer is instructed to bear in mind the manipulators, present and past, whose hands or bodies are not present, but rather implied in the ropes.”⁸

During my research, at Harvard’s Peabody library I discovered the expedition logs of the 5th Thule Expedition led by Danish explorer, Knud Rasmussen, which documented the practice among Inuit peoples of collective performance and the creation of symbolic enclosures, used to combat and contain evil forces. For example, all the people of a settlement would walk along the perimeter surrounding new comers to the village, thus creating a graphic enclosure in the snow with their footprints to contain any demons that may have hitched a ride with the visitors. I utilized these gestures and the string form itself to capture and entangle the destructive forces in society, to symbolically release us from the cycles of our collective violence.

⁸ Ron Rocco from the program description of the venue MINI-PARA-PERFORM-ACTIONS

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Work in Video



The second development that resulted from my *Altair* project was the input of video artist, Henry Linhart. Linhart saw my *Altair* installation and decided to videotape it from the 5th floor of one of the neighboring buildings. As a result, he was able to document its motion rotating in the wind. His video clearly showed the natural calligraphy I spoke of, but more importantly, it pressed upon me the potential of video to document temporal events in a reproducible format. I was aware of film, but I had no experience with video. With Linhart's invitation I began an Artist in Residence at the Experimental TV Center in neighboring Owego, N.Y. in 1982, a working relationship that produced dozens of video works, served many of my projects and lasted until the facility closed in 2009.

As I mentioned, it was during my work on the Ithaca Festival, that a video was made by artist, Henry Linhart documenting my sculpture *Altair*. This video impressed upon me the potential of that medium for making art from temporal events. So, in 1982, when Linhart invited me to accompany him for a three-day residence at the Experimental TV Center in Owego, I accepted.

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA:

Work in Video



The hybrid analog/digital image processing system at ETC 2007

The facility, which was set up in 1969 by Ralph Hocking, David Jones, and Sherry Miller was housed in a large loft in that town and contained a collection of analog and later digital tools and equipment for the image processing and manipulation of video. It was also the workplace for many innovative artists working in that medium including Americans: Gary Hill, Ken Jacobs, Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, Alan Sondheim, S. Korean video artist, Nam June Paik, and Italian-American artist, Aldo Tambellini among others. The facility library was a treasured resource for contemporary experimental video production and in itself provided a source of inspiration.

What was innovative at ETC was the main system interface which consisted of a slider matrix that allowed the user to route one, or several video signals through any number of downstream devices quickly and easily. This ability enabled numerous video patches to be made in a very short period of time allowing for many different image effects.



Still image from the 1983 video *Disrobe*

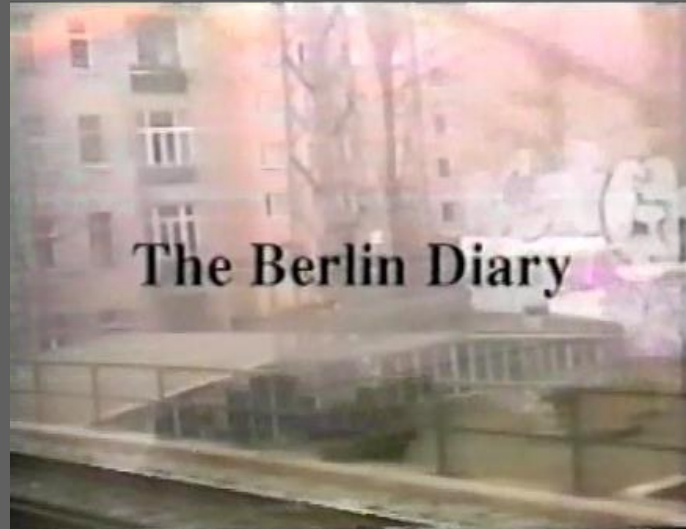


Self-portrait still from the 1983 video *Games*

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA:

Work in Video

My early work at the ETC included a video piece made in 1983 called *Disrobe*. This work was a 5:44 minute study of a single imaging process, during the course of a simple daily action, dressing and undressing. The idea was that this action would be augmented by use of slowly pulsing waveforms, which create positive and negative effects as well as changing image coloration. In essence it was a study of the human form as it is seen through an electronic prism changing with time. What attracted me to this work was its simplicity. It was one patch, producing effects created by analog waveforms that went through the course of their cycle and repeated. The actor also went through one process, the simple act of disrobing and at the completion of that, reversing the process, a performance completed in roughly 6 minutes. *Disrobe* was followed by several other video works, which followed this pattern, with the addition of other input such as sports television events as in the video *Games*, or with pre-recorded material from a martial arts demonstration performed at an anti-war gathering, as found in the video entitled, *Zaroff Master*.



Still from *The Berlin Diary* 2000

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA:

Work in Video

Probably the two most successful of my works in video are *The Berlin Diary* and *Plötzensee* created in 2000. Both were included in the ETC /Experimental Television Center's 5 CD archive of the work of the center's artists between 1969 and 2009⁹. *The Berlin Diary* is a work which documents anecdotal records of Berlin's history as they relate to the trains that crisscross the city. The entire work records the 12-minute passage from Berlin's western center, the Bahnhof Zoo station, to Alexanderplatz the former central station of the D.D.R. capitol in the eastern half of the city. This trip was forbidden during the years that the city was divided and along its route stands many of the significant landmarks of Berlin. The recordings were made over two successive years 1998 to 1999, thus documenting changes at the sites of the Reichstag and Potsdamer Platz during the period of extensive reconstruction that occurred after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Using tools like a video sequencer and mixer these two video recordings were sequenced into the image, or overlaid onto each other with the effects being triggered by the ambient sound within the train cabin.

⁹ ETC /Experimental Television Center 1969-2009 ISBN 978-0-615-32719-8
www.experimentaltvcenter.org/etcdvd

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA:

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My photo: Berlin Railroad tracks – Gleisdreieck 1991

The Berlin Diary

The text for *The Berlin Diary* narrated by actor Tom Nelis, presents the palimpsest of historical fragments from the Cold War and Nazi periods, which can be found among the tracks and train stations of the city. The stories were taken from friends and acquaintances encountered during my year of residence in the city in 1991, as an artist in residence at Künstlerhaus Bethanien. They tell of the abandoned train tracks behind the ruins of the Anhalter Bahnhof that at the time harbored a 45-year-old grove of white birch trees scattered among the rails, and in another passage the story of the Berlin Wall, which today has itself become a phantom. This work was created keeping in mind that many of the artifacts of Berlin's past were disappearing, out of context with the shopping centers and new train lines that were replacing them, and were in danger of falling from memory. In addition to the video work a website was developed for *The Berlin Diary* employing text from the video as follows:

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THE BERLIN DIARIES by RON ROCCO

In 1991, I began a 10 month art residency in Berlin, Germany as a guest artist at Künstlerhaus Bethanien. During this period, I took a place in a shared loft at Schinke Strasse in Berlin's Kreuzberg district.

The building was a typical Berlin factory building with two 'Hofs', or successive interior courtyards connected by a single driveway from the street. Upon my arrival, I was struck by the diversity of activities in this building, articulated on the entryway walls by the many posters and colorful announcements for events taking place in the building and community. There was a Turkish Cultural Center with political posters announcing meetings and events of interest to the large Turkish community in Kreuzberg. In addition, there were performance announcements from a children's theatre called Klecks, German for spots, or smudges of color.

In the courtyard the theatre lived up to its name, sporting a colorful wall of multi-colored paint blots on a white background. The lofts were connected by an exterior steel staircase and freight elevator, which ran up the six stories of the building. Over this and the surrounding walls was a thick growth of dark green ivy.

Standing there, I listened to the mingling of sounds of the life taking place there. As I ascended the interior staircase of the second Hof, the sound of Turkish music began to rise above the other sounds, emanated from the highest floor. I recognized the song it was Livanelli, music I had discovered during my visit to Istanbul just two years earlier. The music was haunting, as it appeared to be drawing me to it, making this connection to my past experience, while at the same time suggesting the beginning of a new life here in Germany.

This was the place I was to inhabit, a two story loft with a large wooden second floor added along the exterior walls, above a common kitchen and dining room. The bathroom on the second floor hosted two bathtubs separated by a small table adorned with a chess game so that the two bathers could enjoy a game while washing away their troubles.

The roof of the building could be accessed by a steel ladder from just outside the loft and it was on the roof that we spent much of our time during the cool summer evenings drinking 'Sekt' German sparkling wine and exchanging stories. It was from the roof and conversations in this building that many of the stories of my BERLIN DIARIES would be collected.

[Editor's Note: The '[']' brackets indicate links on the various web pages, and as readers will note there are layers of links that weave through the content, providing a familiarity through layers of repetition that reflect "Berlin's many layers".] Published in Leonardo Electronic Almanac Volume 4, No. 6, June 1996 Craig Harris, Executive Editor, Roger Malina, Editor ISSN #1071-4391154

[Explore more] Tonight's sky was full with clouds in enormous formations, like a map of Anatolia. Huge thunder clouds moved in from the northwest. They rolled in from the sea over central Europe to Berlin. The sky was a patchwork of light, the clear Prussian blue of evening was accented with monoliths of white. Earlier, the clouds passed across the setting sun and glowed like immense Chinese lanterns. Thunder and darkened billows still tower over the western sky where the sun dropped from sight. These clouds could be seen ringing out massive gray curtains of rain. Suddenly they were upon Berlin and I left the roof as the report of thunder filled the Hof.

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA:

Work in Video

When the rain came it fell square to the ground, direct and uninterrupted. There were no windblown torrents. It was like the watering of a garden and the plants were animated by the falling sheets of rain. Above the trees, outside my bedroom window, I looked down upon a rolling canopy of leaves shivering with the flood. In twenty minutes, it was all over. [Silence once again returned to the Hof.]

[Berlin 1] BERLIN 21/6/91 The S-Bahn Station at Alexanderplatz, the East's beloved Alex, had another-worldly feel at night. Walking there was like passing into a cauldron of time. Alexanderplatz was caught in a [social vortex] which accelerated one into a strange present, pulled from an even more inexplicable past. In my mind, I imagined I could reconstruct Berlin's past by observing the rails which passed through Alex. There was, not far from here, a station known as the Palace of Tears, near the once named Marx-Engels Platz, where DDR citizens 'burgers' shunned by their comrades passed into exile through the subway of the west. Further on, passing into the western half of the city, were the ruined tracks of the Anhalter Bahnhof, choked with a fifty-year growth of [white birch trees]. [Explore More] [social vortex] This is a city of phantoms. During the DDR days it was the phantom maps, with their grayed-out city core representing the forbidden west, that left no clues for the easterner of what to expect on the other side of the wall.

Today it is the wall itself that has become the phantom, along with the procession of S-Bahn place names, which have been banished as non-places: Dimitroff Strasse, Marx-Engels Platz, Leninallee, Karl Maron Strasse, Bruno-Leuschner Strasse, Otto-Winzer Strasse. These are the fallen victims of cultural re-alignment. In Berlin the emotional landscape is hidden, like terrain under a new coat of snow. So much so that people can speak of a 'Mauer im Kopf' wall in the mind, an intangible presence shouldered by 3.5 million inhabitants. The outlines of the recent past are similarly blanketed over. On the surface there remains a metallic calm which denies the turbulent past. The edges are still there, but they are just below the surface, just under what one can see. Like the neon signs newly placed along the Karl-Liebknecht Strasse, which barely cover the faded signage of their predecessor, most buildings bear a palimpsest of the city's earlier tracings. Only someone who knew the nature of the city's [scars] could perceive the tenderness that was present in those places. Never tranquil, yet dormant, till the end of the world that is Berlin! Immer Unruhig!

[Silence once again returned to the Hof.]

[I fulfill a dream] BERLIN 20/8/91 KOTTBUSSE TOR What a strange metamorphosis! This energy which drives me to reject all that I have known, all that I am comfortable with, is insanity. I jump into this new world and find it entirely intact waiting for me to fill my place. How uncanny and almost haunting! Things really are bigger than the sum total of their parts. I feel I could have been here for years and yet? The world shifts and political empires rise and fall. The landscape changes and people move from place to place.

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What is it that guides the change, something which passes beyond consciousness? What a strange world of rich and diverse bounty. I came to the brink in New York, to the edge of the abyss. I hauled a friend in from over the edge and then by some virtue I won myself freedom. The [10,000 things] all went flushing down the toilet. Cars, beaches, summer houses, theaters, drinks, and dinners the whole world of it went out in a whirlwind of events. [white birch trees]

BERLIN 20/11/91 SACKGASSE! Walking I spent this night walking through Kreuzberg, from Sylvia's house along the Paul-Linke Ufer eastward. The drizzle was just enough to moisten my forehead. As my mind wandered, I began a long line of reflection. It had been clear to me from the start that there was much at stake in returning to Berlin: The state of my marriage was unclear. My life in New York was shattered and, in some moments, I even called my soundness of mind into question. But returning to Berlin was necessary. It was my re-awakening. There is passion here, the tempo of which brings on a fever in me. I have too much energy. I feel I cannot extract myself from the force of experiences. I am caught in a stream of emotion and events. I cannot sleep and as I walk off my insomnia my mind moves rapidly through the night. For a moment I stand at the Hobrecht Brücke. I watch the white swans glide through the evening water. Their phantom-like reflections are distorted by a winter breeze. The shadow of the bridge encases their image in a frame of darkness. The streets have been fairly empty and very quiet. This evening holds a looming potential. Above the streets, the ardor of lovers charges the night air with sound. This drifts down from an open window as I pass. There is no end to my loneliness. It gnaws at me. I am losing everything I value. [I fulfill a dream] and yet the dream promises nothing. Emptiness. Soon another apparition will fill the void.

[10,000 things] BERLIN 29/8/91 SCHINKESTRASSE I hear the fireworks outside and I scramble to get out and up high enough to get a view. I have to be fast. I rush for the ladder to the roof and being unfamiliar with it and its shakiness, I back off. I run into the street. I can still hear the fireworks around me, up high, but just out of view. I race to the corner where I surely could see them. As I arrive at the spot, I see the afterglow of the last shot. They are gone. [The time's up.] Your out!

[The time's up.][scars] BERLIN 10/7/91 There were also the tracks that paralleled the Kieffholz Strasse, near Treptower Park. These crossed a trestle bridge to reach the western bank of the Landwehrkanal and at various, more congenial times, transported coal between the two Berlins. The landscape there was desolate and barren. From the bridge one could still observe a row of steel lamp-posts which once illuminated the now phantom wall. Here one was a short distance from the vast dusty lot, which marked the site of the Gorkitzer Bahnhof. The place was haunted by the remains of a tiled pedestrian corridor, once interior to the now vanished structure of the rail station. The residents of Schlesiendes Tor, my friend Ulla's grandmother included, would run to this spot and huddle along the narrow passageway, during the frequent Allied bombing of the city at the end of the war. Now the decapitated tunnel lies like an open wound across the face of this open stretch of land. Soon it too will be covered by one of Berlin's many layers.



Still from the video *Plötzensee* 2000



My photo: Memorial to the victims of the Third Reich *Plötzensee* 1991

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA:

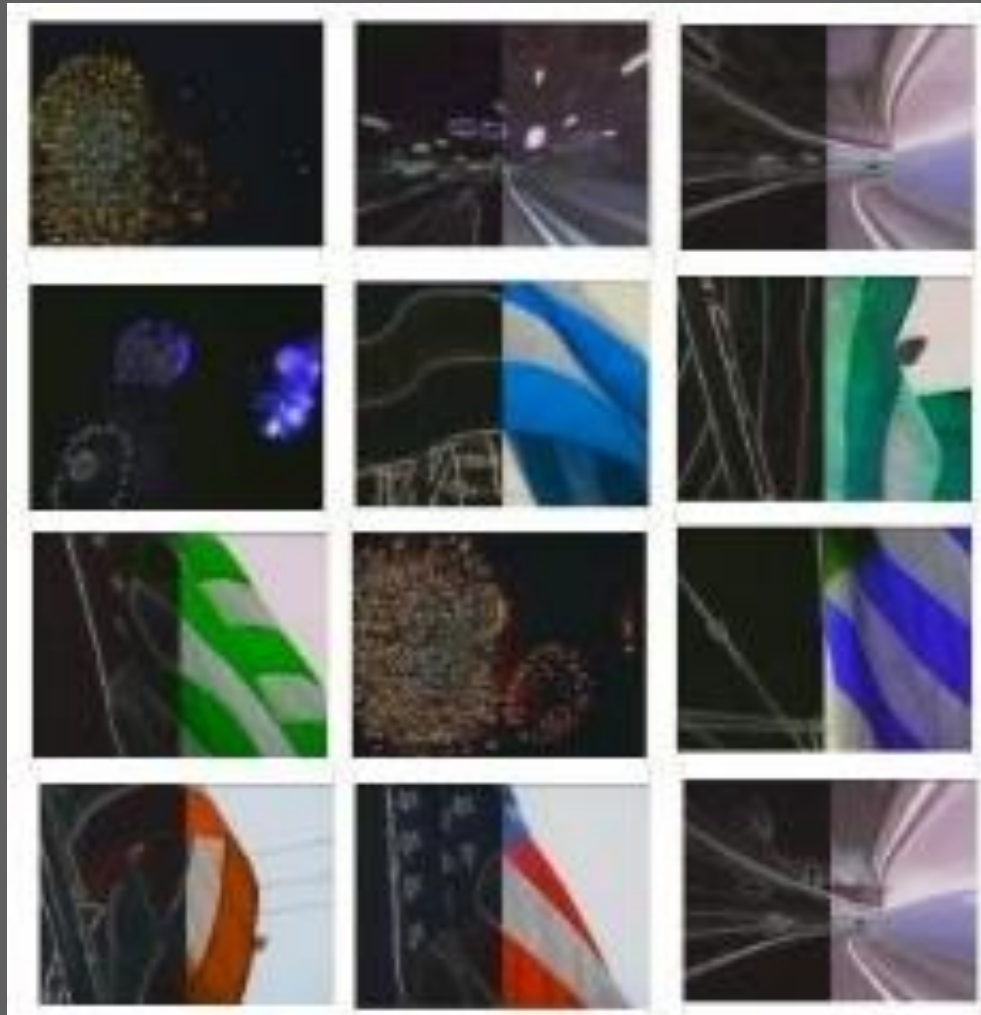
Work in Video

Plötzensee

Plötzensee is the name of a Berlin prison complex at the edge of the city. The room shown in the video was the site of over 3000 Nazi era executions of Communists, Socialist, Jews, Homosexuals or dissenters to Nazi authority during the years between 1933 and 1945. The video overlays the meat hooks from which victims were hung, over an image of present-day pedestrians in Kreuzberg, a district of the city which is home to Berlin's large Turkish population, artists, anarchists, and many leftist citizens who would have fallen afoul of the Nazi administration. Later in the work, a street scene records normal street traffic with the addition of ghost like figures, who walk backwards among the living pedestrian traffic. With this addition I suggest the missing population of the city, terminated during the National Socialist past. *Plötzensee* is intended as a memorial to these victims.

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA:

Work in Video



Still from the video *For My Culture* 2004

In a more autobiographical statement the video, *For My Culture* created around the music of Robbie Williams' performance entitled, *My Culture* provides testimony to my struggle in coming to terms with my own American culture. This runs parallel to Williams' song, which speaks about his attempt as an adult to reconcile childhood feeling toward a psychologically abusive and distant father. In my case, it is an attempt at reconciling feelings of detachment from a belligerent nation whose wars I have opposed since 17 years of age, beginning with the Vietnam conflict, and for which I was vilified and incarcerated as a result of my opposition. This conflict struck close to home as my father was a soldier, war veteran and extremely patriotic and most of my family violently objected to my criticism of America's war. *For My Culture* progresses as a high-speed car ride, a mad dash of energy to escape feelings of entrapment and oppression. It is coupled with the ultimate symbols of American patriotism, the American flag itself and the fireworks of the July 4th Independence celebrations. The shifting colors of the flag and the division of the image into positive and negatives zones suggest a nation in discord, a culture out of balance.

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA:

Work in Video



Still image from ***SNOW***. Video recorded in Berlin, Germany and New York.

Produced by Ron Rocco 2009 using Pure Data software to generate a custom template. 1:35 minutes

© RON ROCCO 2009

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA:

Work in Video



Still images from *Paganini's Caprice No. 24*

performed by Julia Soslov in 2008.

Video recorded in Berlin, Germany.

Produced by Ron Rocco as a tribute to Paganini, a fellow Scorpio.

4:56 minutes

© RON ROCCO 2008

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA:

Work in Video



Still image from *Without You 2008*
music by Marien Neulant

Video recorded in Berlin, London and New York.

Produced by Ron Rocco with special thanks to Sonya Barth & puppets.
4:55 minutes

© RON ROCCO 2008

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Development of a Video Image processor



VLW studies



Time Studies for Modern Dance, 1985

My involvement with video evolved over 28 years reflecting my working interest in the arts. This involvement sometimes resulted in complete works of video art, or in the production of video elements, which were part of my other projects and installations. In the history of video art two of the greatest contributors to that history are Steina and Woody Vasulka. It was Woody Vasulka who stated, *“There is a certain behavior of the electronic image that is unique...It’s liquid, it’s shapeable, it’s clay, it’s an art material, it exists independently.”*⁹

As such, video became one more significant art material in my toolbox. It was this interest in video technology that precipitated my interest, and enrollment in graduate school in 1983 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It was clear to me in the early 80’s that video image processing would become a digital process and I wanted to acquire the knowledge and skills required for me to develop my own toolset of image processing software, as I felt this would codify my signature on the work I would do in that medium. As suggested by writer and art historian Frank Popper this period was a time of great change in posing new attitudes toward the meaning of art as well as in experimentation toward the development of new

⁹ *Art of the Electronic Age* by Frank Popper, Harry N Abrams; First edition (September 1993) ISBN:9780500279182

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Development of a Video Image processor



Time Studies for Modern Dance, 1985

artistic media.¹⁰ My pursuit resulted in software developed at the facilities of the VLW /Visible Language Workshop at M.I.T., working with Ron McNeil. It was this software, which I used to produce video in a number of projects including: *Andro-media*, *Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall*, *Time Studies for Modern Dance*, and *In Light of Sound*. Some of this work ran concurrent with other projects. For example, *Andro-media* manifested as a series of project installations beginning with the first experiments in 1979 till the last installation of the work at the *ISEA (International Symposium on Electronic Arts)* in Montreal, Canada in 1995. *In Light of Sound*, which was a series of installations employing the technology developed for *Andro-media* as well as a newer 'mercury scanner' was related to my collaboration with musician David Hykes and the Harmonic Choir in 1986-87.¹¹

¹⁰ "Art has been the subject of more explosive experimentation in the last twenty years than in almost any other period. Not only have most preconceptions about art and the artist been questioned and sometimes overturned; whole new media and areas of artistic activity have been pioneered, especially since the advent of such technology as the personal computer, Xerox, video and lasers." *Art of the Electronic Age* by Frank Popper, Harry N Abrams; First edition (September 1993) ISBN:9780500279182

¹¹ Both *Andro-media* and *In Light of Sound* are detailed later in this document.



Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall 1985

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Development of a Video Image processor

Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall and *Time Studies for Modern Dance*, are two projects, both of which relied heavily on the output of my software for their effects. They were the fruits of my collaboration with dance choreographer Mel Wong and his Dance Company and resulted in performances, which were presented across the United States spanning 1984-86.

Time Studies for Modern Dance is the video component from the performance *Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall*, which was presented in a premiere performance with the Mel Wong Dance Company at the Asia Society in New York City in March of 1985. This presentation used dance and a real-time computer/video installation to explore changing perceptions of time from both Asian and American cultural viewpoints, thus highlighting cultural convergence and difference. A combination of instantaneous computer-generated video projections on-stage and 16mm films allowed the dancers to weave a tapestry of movement with both visual artifacts of that movement as it appeared from the live projection, or with foreshadowed images contained in the film. Working together with Mel Wong and his dance company I could make the system produce effects, which matched the mood and temperament of the choreography.

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Development of a Video Image processor



Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall 1985

Wong in turn could alter his dancer's movement and speed to take optimum advantage of this new visual reference to the dance. I stated at the time, *"The formal concerns of movement in dance could accentuate the effects of my equipment on the flow of time, providing a suitable format for the beauty and complexity of this subtle video processor."*

It was a performance that ***The New York Times*** dance critic, Jennifer Dunning described as one of the most successful integrations of video imagery and modern dance as follows:

The New York Times, DANCE: WORK BY MEL WONG by Jennifer Dunning, Published: April 1, 1985

The perception of time, that ordering and motivating element in dance, has been a concern of many choreographers. The latest to investigate it is Mel Wong, whose "Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall," a new, multi-media dance was performed on Friday at the Asia Society. The first half of the full-evening work was absorbing, if slightly long-winded choreographically. Essentially a pure dance piece with a few, scattered props, "Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall"

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Development of a Video Image processor



Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall 1985

flowed along on a stage that at times seemed to be metaphysically layered. A pose here or gesture there suggested that the back represented memory, the middle of the stage mediated experience, and the front the immediate present. At such moments, a dancer crossing the stage on a diagonal created a sense of daring and excitement. The dancers' moves were often transmitted by video onto a large screen behind them, with the computerized projections moving occasionally just a fraction behind and not always identically with the live dancers. For once, projected images were skillfully woven with actual dancing, in a way that sometimes called to mind disco video-dance. But Mr. Wong had more serious things in mind, as was evident from his brief appearances carrying a cardboard box from which Tibetan ritual chants emerged mysteriously, and from his choice of music from Philip Glass's portentous Koyaanisqatsi for his score. Working interestingly against these themes was the movement, which darted and surged and spilled across the stage, punctuated by held poses suggesting states of mind, and by several odd passages in which one dancer appeared to be a guru, or priestess who calmed and led the others. Mr. Wong has a clear and vital sense of spatial arrangement, and he clustered bodies arrestingly at times.

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Development of a Video Image processor



Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall 1985

But sometimes the ritual was oblique and private-seeming. And the second half added nothing and was of a length unsupported by the work. Still, there was good dancing to be seen by a company of 11 performers dancers led by Bonnie Brown, Margaret Medas, Laurie Roth, Kristin Smith and the compelling Emily Stern, clearly a young dancer to keep an eye on. The computer video art was by Ron Rocco. It occurred on a stage washed with muted, clear light designed by Blu. Gabriel Berry designed the luminous white coveralls and brilliant-colored top.

This performance, funded by a 1984 Inter-Arts Grant from The National Endowment for the Arts and the assistance of SONY Corporation, through use of their SMC 70G computer, SMI 7075 frame buffer and high-intensity video projection system, may have been the first live stage-side application of computer processed video for dance performed in real-time.

For this production three different computer systems were employed. The SONY produced system mentioned above, provided live processing at the Asia Society. Along with prepared segments I produced at two facilities:

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Development of a Video Image processor

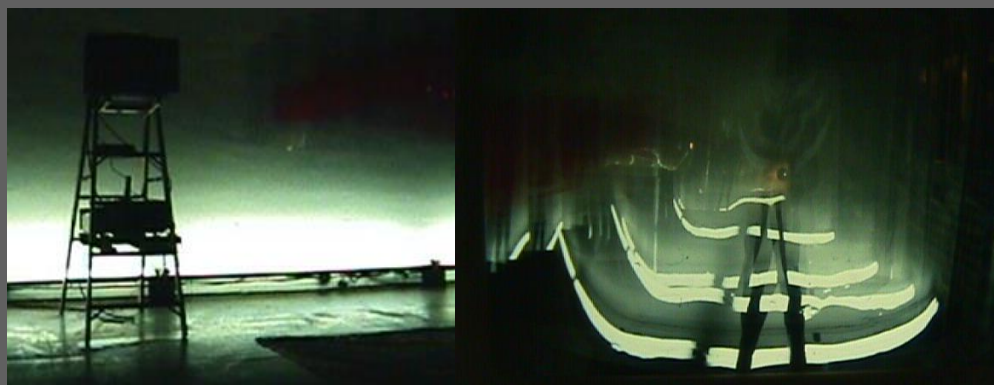
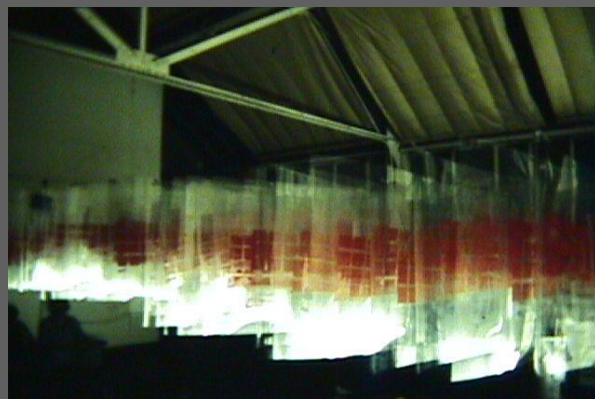


Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall 1985

the Experimental T.V Center in Owego, New York with equipment designed by David Jones and Paul Davis, and The Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Visible Language Workshop, using the video processing software I wrote for VLW's processor.

Michael Haerdter, director of Berlin's Künstlerhaus Bethanien, and sponsor of my 1991 Berlin residency, described my work as "*formulations of border situations and convergence-between nature and technology, heaven and earth, light and sound, Buddha and Einstein.*" My interest in these moments of transition appeared in several projects presented both in the United States and in Europe.

This performance, appeared in Atlanta, Georgia Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Phoenix, Arizona along with other venues as part of the 1986 American tour. The original soundtrack for the performance, *Koyaanisqatsi* by Philip Glass, was replaced by music from musician, Andrew Newhart for the purpose of producing a later video work.



Studio installation for *Andro-media* at the Ithaca Art Cooperative Ithaca, NY 1979

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

The Development of *Andro-media*

To discuss the development of my *Andro-media* project we need to step back to 1979 and my studio facilities at the Ithaca Art Cooperative, which I co-founded in Ithaca, New York. Fascinated with the prospect of creating a room size intervention, utilizing synthetic light sources and sound, my fellow artists Henry Linhart, Stiller Zusman, and I prepared an installation at our joint studio. That first effort was not a true interactive system. It only employed a coordinated burst of sound and a dot pattern of light in the video image, juxtaposed with the random firing of a He-Ne laser. But, it provided the seed from which a future system could be envisioned. From that study my own interest grew towards the development of a truly interactive imaging system, in which the sound of a synthesizer, or a human voice could generate synthetic light imagery from laser light and video elements, which would share a direct relationship with the sound. This system which I titled, *Andro-media*, was meant to convey the idea of an android, self-generating system of media sources, which would have a constellation-like appearance in the containing environment, and hence the name bore a similarity to the name of the Andromeda Galaxy. Thus, one of my goals was to develop a

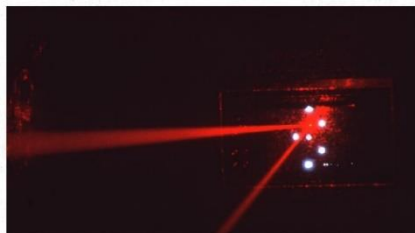
the installation

the Andro-media Series of Installations

My series of installation art works entitled Andro-media were conceive during experiments in the creation of synthetic light imagery begun in 1979 at the Ithaca Art Cooperative in Ithaca, New York.



First studies at the Ithaca Art Cooperative in Ithaca, NY



These first experiments were undertaken in collaboration with artists Stiller Zusman and Henry Linhardt. In this work I employed video images created by Mr. Linhardt, which appeared as a random firing of white dots in a matrix pattern projected across the video monitor. Over this pattern I used a Helium-Neon laser to scan single bursts of laser light onto the video monitor's surface. This laser was driven by audio input generated by an audio synthesizer. The installation was displayed within a chamber in the studio which contained an atmospheric media .

This experiment, a simple analog system generating incidental image combinations, led me to speculate on the possibility of a truly interactive system where audio, laser scan, and video would all be inherently joined in the production of a light environment.

These first speculations were later analyzed, refined and manifest in the context of studies at the facilities of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for Advanced Visual Study in Cambridge, Massachusetts as well as in further experiments, over repeated residencies from 1983 to 1986, at the studios of the Experimental Television Center in Owego, New York.

project description

The resulting system was an interactive, multimedia environment, which took a direct audio input and used it to pump laser scanning motors. These in turn generated an oscilloscope-like pattern of red HeNe laser light onto the surface of a cathode ray video monitor. These laser scans retained all the characteristics of the original audio signal, producing graphic representations of the amplitude and frequency signatures of the audio input.

A video camera was use to create a video feedback loop, generated by the scanned laser image. Thus a link was established between the audio signal, laser, video camera, and monitor within a closed system. The resulting video signal was then sent through image processing software I developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Visual Language Workshop, which I authored in PL1 on a Perkin Elmer 3230 mainframe. This software produced six separate processes. I also employed analog and digital video image processors resident at the studios of the Experimental Television Center, using a Jones frame buffer. The resulting image was processed, sometimes with alterations to the time synchronization of the video signal generating what is known as image artifacts and then displayed on the video monitor to be viewed under the brilliant red laser scans.

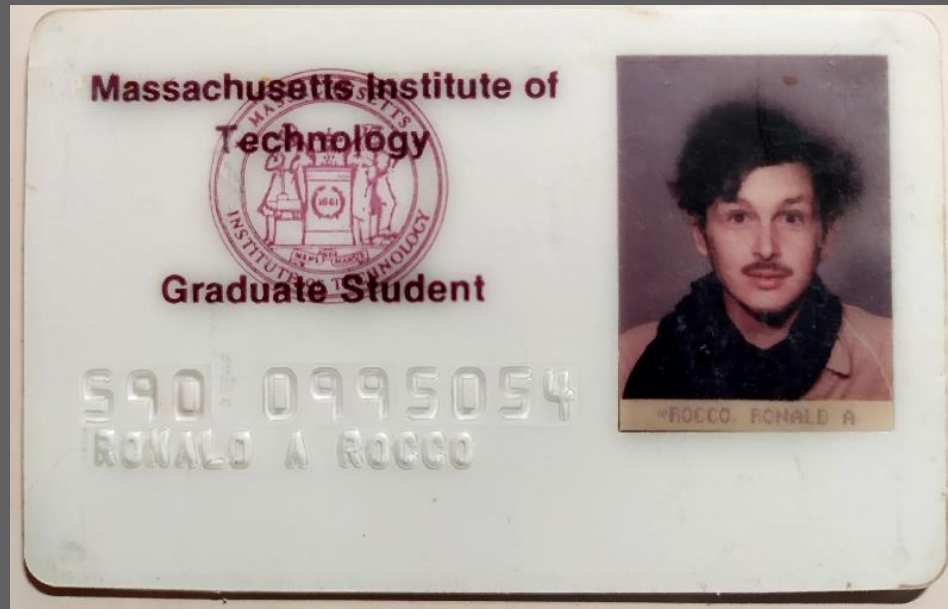


Installation images: Left - First studies in Ithaca, NY, Center - Two images from a working installation at the artist's studio in Brooklyn, NY, Right - Installation view from the Urban Light exhibition at Limelight in New York City

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA
The Development of **Andro-media**

system of this nature, when I began work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for Advanced Visual Study in 1983.

*"The Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) was created in 1967 by György Kepes within the School of Architecture and Planning. Hungarian-born Kepes, collaborator of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, emigrated to the U.S. in 1937. He taught at the New Bauhaus in Chicago and then at the Illinois Institute of Design alongside Mies van der Rohe before coming to M.I.T. The C.A.V.S. provided long-term appointments to a wide range of important innovators in the visual arts, environmental arts, dance, and new media: composer Maryanne Amacher, avant-garde filmmaker Stan van der Beek, artist and educator Lowry Burgess, video artist Peter Campus, performance artist Charlotte Moorman, artist Nam June Paik and many others. Otto Piene, a member of the ZERO artist group, succeeded Prof. Kepes as director in 1974."*¹³



¹³ History of the MIT / Massachusetts Institute of Technology Program in Art, Culture and Technology (ACT) <http://act.mit.edu/about-act/history>



Time Studies for Modern Dance, 1985

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

The Development of *Andro-media*

The noteworthy history of the Center for Advanced Visual Study at M.I.T. and my admiration of the then current director, Otto Piene, made it the logical place to acquire the needed skills to realize my installation concept. At M.I.T. I worked directly with Professor Patrick Purcell of the Architecture Machine Group, a predecessor of the M.I.T. Media Lab and Professor, Ron MacNeil at the Visible Language Workshop in learning the PL1 software language and authoring the code necessary for an image processing software that would process my video input. I formulated the concept of a controlled video feedback loop, which would be restrained by the modulation of a laser beam as opposed to the beam of the cathode ray tube, as the source of my video signal. Through my repeated visits to the Visible Language Workshop after my departure from M.I.T. in 1984 I was able to utilize this system for processing of the *Andro-media* sessions as well as for generating content for my later, *Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall* and *Time Studies for Modern Dance* collaborations with the Mel Wong Dance Company.

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Collaboration with David Hykes. Studies in the
visualization of sound



Cymatic studies: Nodal patterns in Cornstarch and water generated by a sine wave

After leaving M.I.T. I resumed work on *Andro-media* at the facilities of the Experimental TV Center in Owego, New York where I had been a guest artist-in-residence since 1982. Until 1985 I had been utilizing an audio synthesizer to create the modulations of the laser beam for *Andro-media*, but later in that year I became aware of the harmonic overtone chanting practiced by the musician, David Hykes and the Harmonic Choir. Hykes, like many other musicians and artists, was interested in visualization systems to augment his music.

For several centuries, researchers and artists have devised various methods to give visual form to sound. This study known as cymatics, dates back to Robert Hooke in 1680 who created nodal patterns in flour by vibrating a glass plate with a bow. Another researcher, Ernst Chladni repeated this work in 1787 using sand on metal plates. He published his findings in his book *Entdeckungen über die Theorie des Klanges* (Discoveries in the Theory of Sound)

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Collaboration with David Hykes. Studies in the
visualization of sound



Composition VII by Wassily Kandinsky

In a more subjective manner, painter Wassily Kandinsky adopted a colorful palette and abstract style of painting to create art works like *Composition VII* from 1913. It is thought that Kandinsky suffered the effects of synaesthesia, which is a condition of cross-wiring in the brain that gives a person the sense of hearing color, tasting words, or seeing sound.

In the 1960s and early 70s Swiss doctor and researcher, Hans Jenny worked extensively on documenting the phenomena of cymatics. "He coined the term 'Cymatics' in his 1967 book, *Kymatik* (translated *Cymatics*). Inspired by systems theory and the work of Ernst Chladni, Jenny delved deeply into the many types of periodic phenomena, but especially the visual display of sound. He pioneered the use of laboratory grown piezoelectric crystals, which were quite costly at that time. Hooking them up to amplifiers and frequency generators, the crystals functioned as transducers, converting the frequencies into vibrations that were strong enough to set the steel plates into resonance. He made the resultant nodal fields visible by spreading a fine

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

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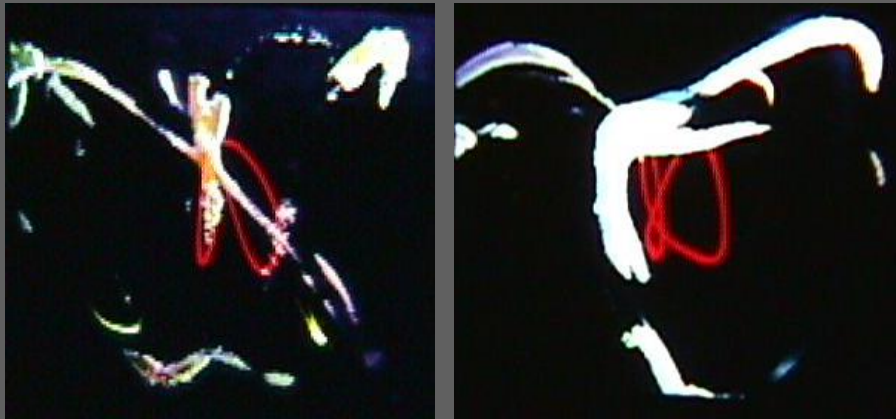
Cymatic studies: Nodal fields generated in sand using piezo-electronics on a metal plate.

*powder lycopodium spores of a club moss, as well as many other methods and materials. Jenny documented much of his work in still photos which were compiled into two volumes published in 1967 and 1972, and republished in 2001 as a single hardcover edition¹⁴. He also documented his experiments in 16mm films which have since been re-released on a DVD entitled **Cymatic SoundScapes: Bringing Matter to Life with Sound.**" Jenny's work was to influence many other artists and researchers including Alvin Lucier and musician David Hykes, with whom I later worked.*

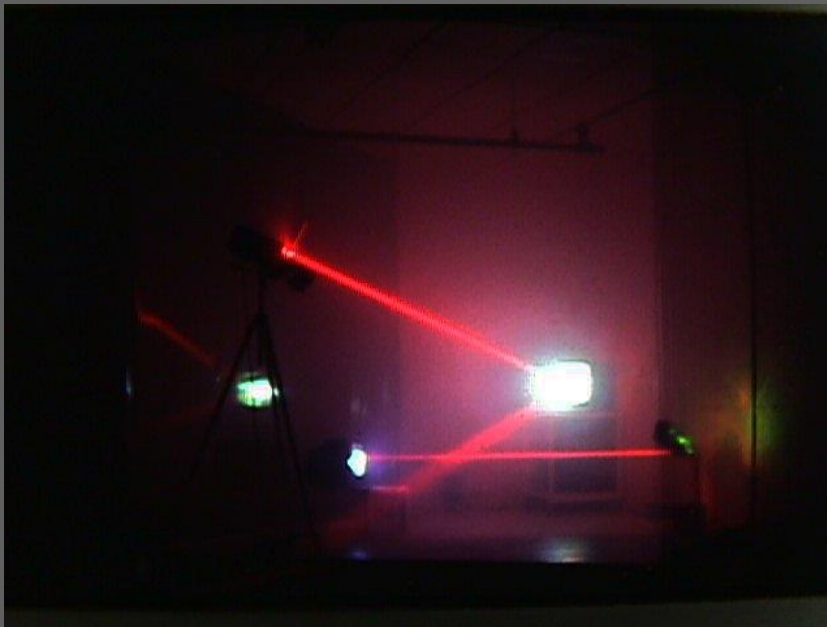
"Jenny's work was also followed up by Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) founder György Kepes at M.I.T. His [Kepes's] work in this area included an acoustically vibrated piece of sheet metal in which small holes had been drilled in a grid. Small flames of gas burned through these holes and thermodynamic patterns were made visible by this setup."^{14a}

¹⁴ *Cymatics: A Study of Wave Phenomena & Vibration* by Hans Jenny July, 1, 2001 ISBN 1888138076

^{14a} Listing from Wikipedia for "Cymatics" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymatics>



Video and laser images *from Andro-media*



Installation view of *Andro-media II*

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Collaboration with David Hykes. Studies in the
visualization of sound

Having employed a sound imaging system like Hans Jenny's vibrating sand particles to generate images, David Hykes presented these experiments at his concerts. I met David Hykes in 1985, prior to 1975 Hykes had been known as an experimental filmmaker. He had been attracted to traditional and sacred music, which led him to study the music of western and central Asia. It was his introduction to western Mongolian Hoomi 'throat singing' and his familiarity with overtone chanting of the Tantric Tibetan Buddhist tradition, which led him to form the Harmonic Choir in 1975.

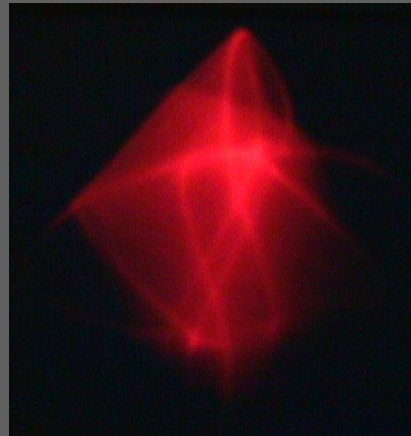
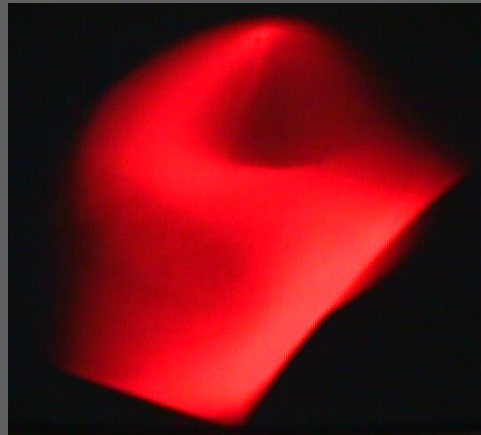
*"In the Hoomi tradition, singers produce fundamental tone in the bass or baritone range, and then by extremely precise modulation of the abdominal muscles, chest, and vocal apparatus - larynx, tongue, jaws, cheeks, and lips - project simultaneously a higher tone or tones, related in frequency to the fundamental tone by whole number ratios. These higher frequencies are called 'overtones' or 'harmonics'. In producing harmonics, the voice acts like a kind of sonic prism, 'refracting' sound along a frequency spectrum which extends upward from the fundamental tone."*¹⁵

¹⁵ Album notes: David Hykes - The Harmonic Choir : Hearing Solar Winds (1983 - Ocora 558 607)

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Collaboration with David Hykes. Studies in the
visualization of sound

Hykes' music was captivating and the characteristics of the sound his voice produced created exquisite patterns on the machines I had assembled. The idea of driving my advanced system of computers, laser, and video to generate imagery from the sound of a human voice, practicing an ancient tradition of Buddhist overtone chanting, fascinated me. I approached Hykes with the suggestion of collaboration. Our interaction was supported by the New York State Council on the Arts and resulted in installations in New York City at The Cathedral of St. John the Divine and in Canada, as guest faculty to The Banff Center in Alberta in 1987. Through our combined work we created several recordings and pioneered a new system of mercury scanning, which we also used at the time in the creation of visual imagery with the Helium-Neon laser. The research, which involved reflecting the red helium-neon laser light off the surface of a vibrating drop of mercury, projecting it on a rear-projection screen was documented in photographs, later published in the 1987 catalog of *Ars Electronica* in Linz, Austria.



Above: A vibrating droplet of Mercury in the Mercury scanner and Helium-Neon Laser light patterns generated by the Mercury scanner.



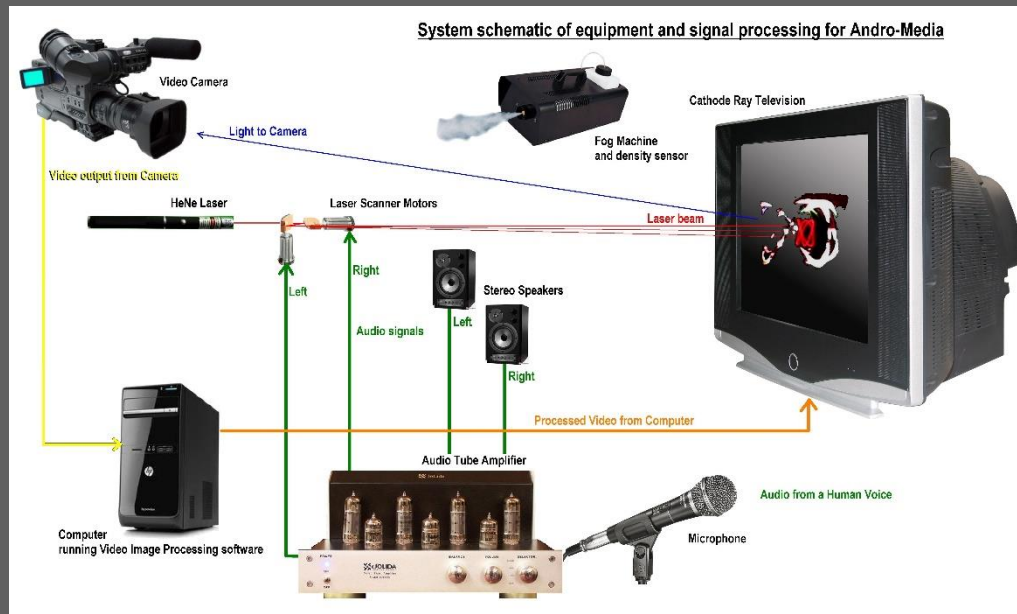
Installation for *In Light of Sound* at The Cathedral of St. John the Divine, 1986

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

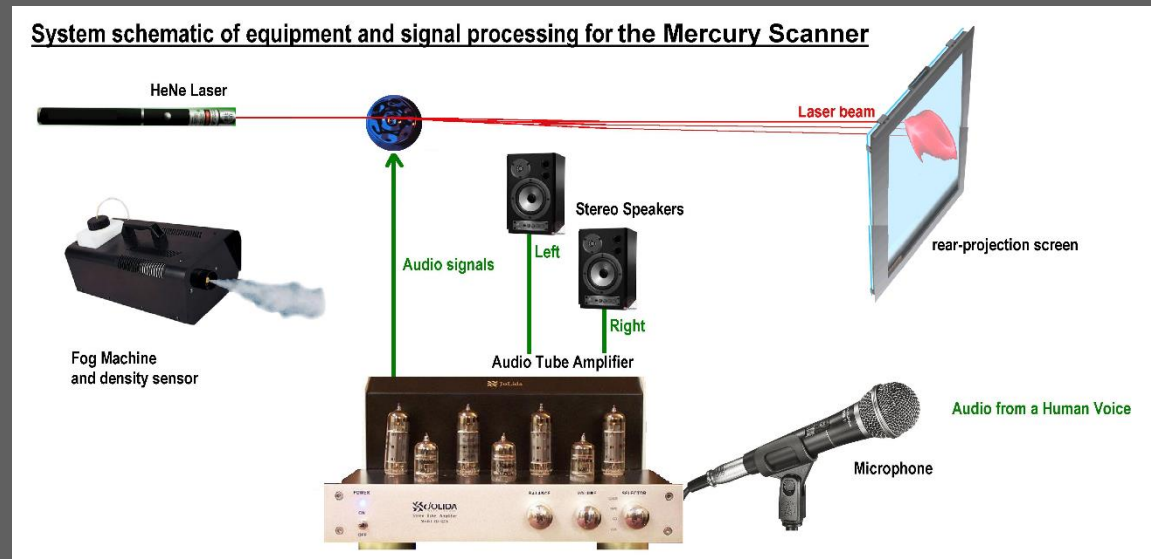
Mercury scanning and the performance *In Light of Sound*

With the development of the mercury scanner to create images, it became possible to process live sound in an installation at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, which we did in the 1986 performance of The Harmonic Choir entitled, *In Light of Sound*. The installation for this event, which I titled *Andro-media III*, employed both the original computer/video process and the new mercury scan systems. In this case, the new system was being driven with the sound produced during the actual concert and the legacy system was employed along with the mercury scanner after the concert, driven by pre-recorded material.

In reviewing this work one might ask why a live microphone was not used with the imaging system for visitors to our installation to participate directly in creating images. But in fact, this arrangement would not have produced any noteworthy results. Spoken words and the sound produced by untrained singers are full of jumbled frequencies and appear as static in these visualization systems. The equipment was found to work best when the vocalist involved was able to sing the 'overtones', or 'harmonics' as produced by David Hikes and his partners. Primarily for this reason the addition of live audience input was not considered important.



Schematic for *Andro-media*



Schematic for the mercury scanner with nodal patterns in a drop of mercury and Helium-Neon laser reflections.

LIGHT AND DYNAMIC MEDIA

Mercury scanning and the performance *In Light of Sound*

In conclusion, *Andro-media* created a process where the elements; the scanning laser, video and digital processing was truly connected and responded to each other. The musician could alter his, or her sound to create certain patterns and the laser would respond causing the generation of video feedback and computer output, which would display a visual effect produced from that sound. In that way the *Andro-media* installations did serve well in presenting my vision.



Decoy 2005

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM

As I have proposed earlier in this writing, I believe that materials have inherent symbolic, or associative meanings, which lend them psychological energy. I suggested that we can be influenced toward change, or at least toward a new thinking, by a work of art that employs materials in this manner.

I often begin a piece by working from a mind image, a dream, autobiographical content, or some social context. Sometimes the process of assembling elements leads to a sensibility, a relationship between the parts. When I work with found objects, I am reminded that they have their own history, a power which emanates from within them, from the hands that have touched them, or the roles they have played. My work becomes a process of problem solving by juggling, and balancing the history of these objects and their relationships. I know a piece is done when the extraneous parts have been removed; it is pared down to the essentials.



Power of Money 1991

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM

In speaking more generally, it can be said that objects can function as symbols and the visual artist can “*manipulate symbols*”¹⁶ to quote Joseph Beuys, to tap deep associative meanings. Beuys believed all materials have an inherent energy which could be employed to correct for an energy imbalance. I would add to this idea by proposing that materials have inherent symbolic, or associative meanings, which lend them associative, or psychological energy. I suggested that as creatures who use our imaginations to create scenes, to design our environments and to engage with others we can be influenced toward change by a work of art that employs materials in this way. The visual artist can leverage the emotions of a viewer by employing the associations enjoining a familiar object to bring an experience to mind, evoking a feeling, or past experience in the viewer. As an artist, one can manipulate the energies, the associated meanings of materials and objects to create an environment and context.

16 Ulmer, Gregory (1985). *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys*. Johns Hopkins University Press. pp.238–240

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM



Star Blind 2006

Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Carl Gustav Jung addresses these deep associative meanings when he states,

“What we call a symbol is a term, a name, or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It implies something vague, unknown, or hidden from us...Thus a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider ‘unconscious’ aspect that is never precisely defined, or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason.”

In the book ***Man and his Symbols***, Jung states, “*Man also produces symbols unconsciously and spontaneously, in the form of dreams.*”¹⁷ Thus, for me the documentation of dreams has been an important process in the mining of this symbolism. There are many art works that I have created in the past that find their source material in my dreams. Two such objects are the works entitled, ***Night Yearnings*** and ***The Sleepless Nights Left Behind***. Both works were created during my residence in Berlin, Germany from 2006 to 2009.

17 *Man and his Symbols*, Carl G. Jung with M. L. Franz, J. L. Henderson, J. Jacobi and A. Jaffe. Windfall books /Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N.Y

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM:

Night Yearnings



Night Yearnings, 2007 (Private collection, Berlin)

They document a time of great upheaval in my life and thus contain much psychic energy.

In *Night Yearnings* we see a steel bird cage containing a large red pillow, a heart shaped one, the kind commonly given as a gift during Valentine's Day celebrations. This pillow has been bound with strips of plaster encrusted cloth. The cloth forms a bandage over the bound heart. It documents the feeling of loss and pain that resulted from my divorce of 2006. In front of the pillow sitting at the bottom of the cage stands a small black picture frame, a video frame that plays a video looped image. This image is of a mattress and other debris draped over a steel chain suspended over the surface of the water, in this case the water is that of the Rhine River in Cologne, Germany. The steel chain is the mooring chain of a ship docked along the banks of the Rhine, which I had encountered during a walk through the city sometime in 2006 or early 2007. The video shows the water rushing under the mattress, unrelenting. This image of my mattress suspended over water was in a dream prior to my visit to Cologne, so the video was made as an effort to document the dream. During the videotaping a black bird, a crow, landed on the chain.



Video stills from **Night Yearnings**, 2007

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM:

Night Yearnings

This bird squawked a few calls and then flew off. This visitor to my 'dream' was unplanned and unexpected, but I found it highly symbolic and the reference to the bird cage, which from that point forward would always remain open, seemed appropriate.

Jung tells us that the bird is an ancient symbol of transcendence. He points out that in ancient Egypt the god Thoth recognized as having the head of a bird (an Ibis) was an underworld figure associated with transcendence. In this light, I see this artwork as a symbol of liberation from both the dream and the psychic pain and suffering experienced earlier.

The work is now permanently resident in Berlin in the collection of Mr. Jens Alber. What Mr. Alber said when he purchased the work from me in 2009, I find noteworthy. For him the work symbolized his freedom from the burdens of his professorship at the Humboldt University and the advent of his coming retirement. In my mind, the reference seemed appropriate, thus I would say the psychic energy is conserved in this work.

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM

The Sleepless Nights Left Behind



The Sleepless Nights Left Behind, 2007

The Sleepless Nights Left Behind is an installation artwork that resulted from a dream where the bedding on my mattress was being dragged away by a machine that reeled in lines of barbed wire. To my surprise, one day while undertaking my weekly combing of the Berlin flea market I stumbled upon a machine that I could substitute as the one I had envisioned. It was a barbed wire deployment apparatus attached to a military backpack. Evidently, it was an item in use by the troops of the former DDR, which found its way to the flea market after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The machine was perfect; the large reel with its handle could visually have as easily been used to pull in material, including my bedding, as been used to deploy wire. For the installation I fabricated two concrete cast pillows, which would be entangled in the barbed wire. In addition, I placed the machine on a tripod like stand and encircled the device with a band of steel cable.

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM



Oracle, 2007

Another tool, which I have utilized for the development of symbolic references in my work has been the *I Ching*, otherwise known as *The Book of Changes*. This book was brought to the West through the work of Richard Wilhelm who translated the Chinese text into German in the 1950's, it was later rendered into English as part of the Bollingen Series XIX and published by Princeton University Press.¹⁸ We are told by Carl Jung that this ancient Chinese system of divination dates back to the fourth millennium B.C. In his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* Jung talks of extensive research he undertook with the *I Ching*, and of his discussions with Wilhelm.¹⁹

Artists have been interested in the supernatural, random chance and systems of divination for many years. The Dada artists of 1915-20 used games of chance to “*liberate Dada from the tight correlation between words and meaning*”.

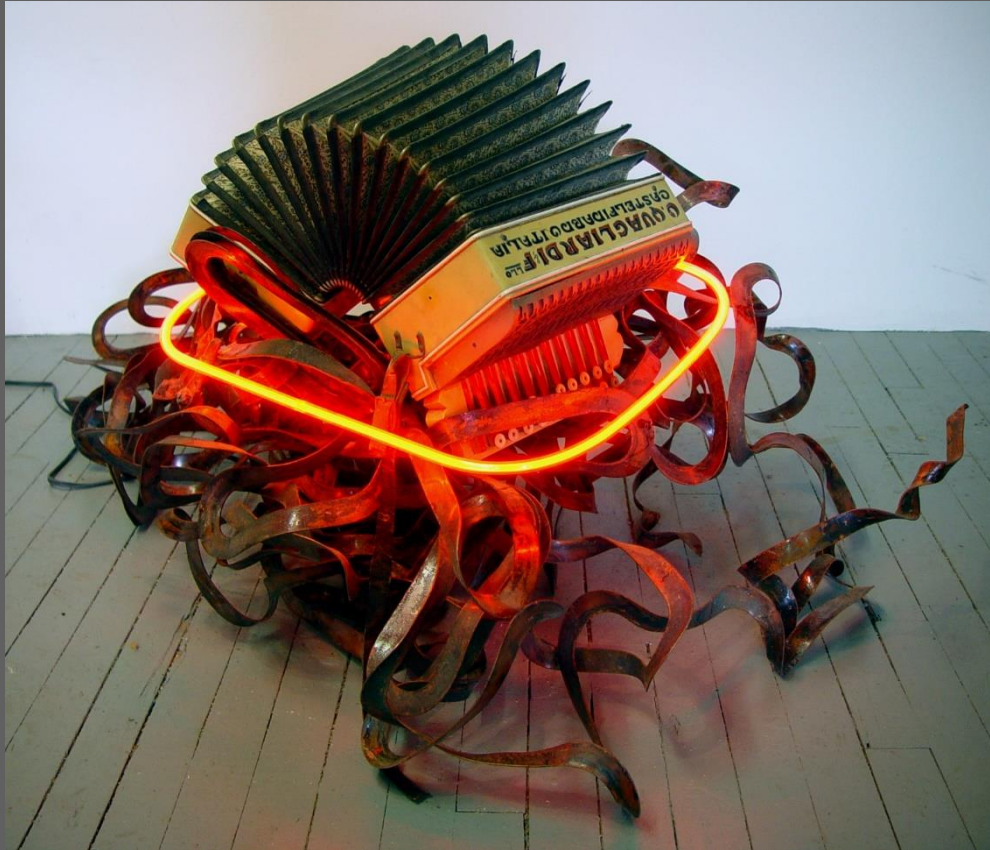
One theory on the origin of the name Dada suggests, “*..(it) came during a meeting of the group when a paper knife stuck into a French-German dictionary happened to point to 'dada', a French word for 'hobbyhorse'”*²⁰.

¹⁸ *The I Ching or The Book of Changes*, Richard Wilhelm translation. English by Cary F. Baynes with foreword by Carl G. Jung. Bollingen Series XIX Princeton University Press 1950

¹⁹ *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* by C. G. Jung translated from German by Richard and Clara Winston. Vintage Books, published 1961 by Random House New York, N.Y.

²⁰ Wikipedia: Dada <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dada> referenced to: Budd, Dona, *The Language of Art Knowledge*, Pomegranate Communications, Inc.

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM



When the Music is Over, 2003

The first offspring of European Dada, the Surrealists, built upon this interest in art that functioned beyond reason. Its chief spokesman, Andre Breton “*who had trained in medicine and psychiatry*”²¹ understood well the power of the sub-conscious.

“Back in Paris, Breton joined in Dada activities and started the literary journal *Littérature* along with Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault. They began experimenting with automatic writing—spontaneously writing without censoring their thoughts—and published the writings, as well as accounts of dreams, in the magazine. Breton and Soupault delved deeper into automatism and wrote *The Magnetic Fields* (1920). Continuing to write, they attracted more artists and writers; they came to believe that automatism was a better tactic for societal change than the Dada attack on prevailing values.” “Freud’s work with free association, dream analysis, and the unconscious was of utmost importance to the Surrealists in developing methods to liberate imagination.”²²

In light of this history and the connections between the father of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud and his one-time professional associate and friend, Carl G. Jung it should come as no surprise

²¹ Wikipedia: Surrealism <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surrealism>

²² Wikipedia: Dada <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dada> referenced to: Budd, Dona, The Language of Art Knowledge, Pomegranate Communications, Inc.

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM

that artists would find their way to the *I Ching*. Two who have employed the *I Ching* are musician John Cage and the dancer-choreographer, Merce Cunningham. “Merce Cunningham’s creative output would largely be influenced, both deliberately and indirectly, by two forces: 44 years of collaboration with composer John Cage, and their mutual casting of the *I Ching* coins, the ancient Chinese *Book of Changes*, with which they often determined the course of their creative process through its chance operations.”²³

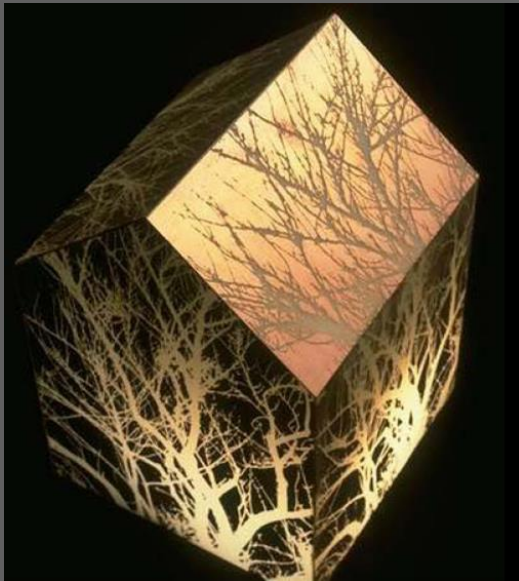


Work on What has been Spoiled, 1994

In my sculpture entitled, *Work on What has been Spoiled* the title I use comes from the English translation for Ku /Decay the 18th hexagram of the 64 I Ching hexagram variations. A reading of the text associated with the hexagram tells us “*The Chinese character Ku represents a bowl in whose contents worms are breeding.*” The artwork contains a strong visual element, which presents the image of decay that is the partial skeleton and remains of a dead bird. This bird image is photo-etched into a copper sheet, a material I’ve used extensively, which is known primarily as the raw stock of a computer printed circuit board. This material is actually two layers, a very thin one of copper over a layer of semi-transparent fiberglass. Once I have used

²³ Merce Cunningham, John Cage and the I Ching by Sylvie Nantais 2009. <https://suite.io/sylvie-nantais/26q52sa>

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Edifice I, 1990



Edifice III, 1990

acids to remove the copper surface, I can place the board over a light source and the light will be seen from below the copper surface in the areas I have photographically removed. This is what we see in this work and in many other pieces from my series *Limits of Sight*, and *Edifice I, II, III* and in the installation *The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight*. The board in this work is surrounded by a frame of flattened cardboard. This material is common on New York City streets as a familiar waste material. I have chosen to use it for this work because I believe it conveys the message that the refuse, we create has adverse and long-lasting effects in the natural world. The impermanence of the material also suggests the unsustainable demeanor of our current methods of living in the world and the title indicates that we need to work on changing those methods. *The New York Times* art critic Dominick Lombardi reacted to this when he wrote:

*"Ron Rocco's **Work on What has been Spoiled** a mixed media piece comprised of cardboard, Plexiglas, photo-etched copper and artificial light, is the exhibition's most potent piece. Displayed directly on the floor, the brownish tones of the back-lighted image that covers the central piece of Plexiglas suggests,*

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM



Unitiled Disaster, 1993 from the exhibition *Private Parts*

*but does not limit itself to, the dangers of the pursuit of power. The image, which is difficult to decipher, looks like a bald eagle as road kill. The thick layers of strapped-together, flattened cardboard boxes that frame the image is a stroke of genius, adding to the impermanent feeling of the work.*²⁴

Private Parts

In 1974, I made my maiden trip through Europe after my 20th birthday. I was traveling with my girlfriend, Barbara and the arrangement we had worked out between us was that we would spend one month in Germany, because I studied German, in exchange for one month in Yugoslavia, where she could practice her Serbo-Croatian. As a result of that decision, I found myself in Marshal Tito's Yugoslavia visiting at Rijeka, Split, Dubrovnic, Trebinje, Mostar, Sarajevo, Beograd and the border town across from Turnu Severin, Romania as well as Turnu Severin itself. I loved my visit there. Because, we could both speak a bit of the local language, we were able to find ourselves accommodations with locals. So, many evenings were spent eating with families, talking with an Uncle who had been a guest worker in Germany, or helping the children with their English

²⁴ The New York Times /Entertainment, "Inaugural Invitational at Collaborative Concepts, Beacon, New York" By D. DOMINICK LOMBARDI Published: Sunday, April 22, 2001

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homework. We had very wonderful experiences, so when the Yugoslav Civil War broke out in 1993 it made a deep psychological impact. I knew children, now in their 20's who would be either fighting in, or victim to this bloodshed. I had friends who now returned to their homes in an attempt to protect their families. In an ordered society like modern Europe, a society of culture and prosperity, how was this possible? The Europe of 1993 seemed so far removed from the insanity that had overtaken the Serbs, Croats, Bosnians and others engaged in this carnage.

It was in this context that my Dutch project *Private Parts*, product of my residency in Rotterdam at the facilities of Kunst & Complex, was undertaken. *Private Parts*, focused on self-examination. However, in this case, self is not defined as being limited to the individual. This body of art works delineated personal issues such as age, masculinity, and health, but could also be understood to have a more global meaning, in this context addressing questions of human frailty, genocide and social values in times of transition. In this body of works, I often referred to elements of control and order and to environments bordering on social cataclysm, with images of sinking ships,

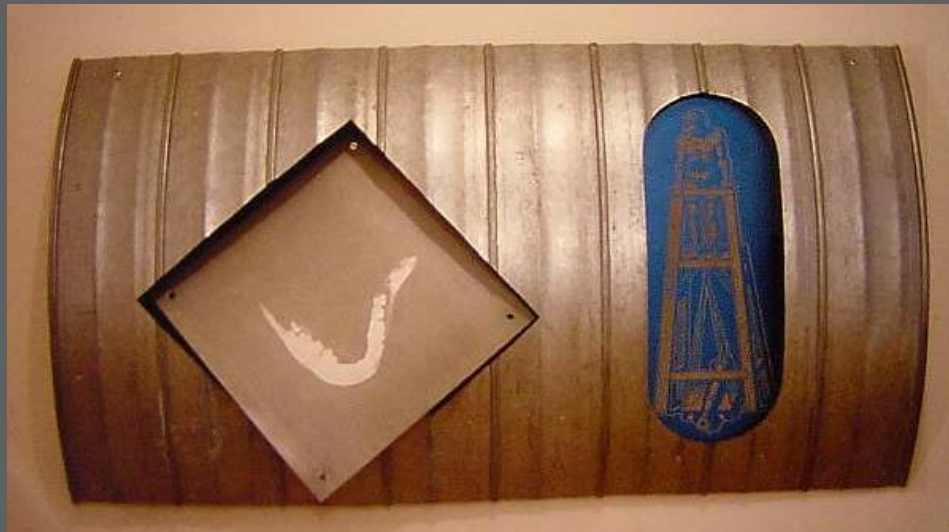


The Pen, 1993 from the exhibition *Private Parts*

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deserted streets and disoriented swimmers. In addition, I combed through the library in Rotterdam to find images from Alchemy, or from medieval texts that I could use to illustrate elements of the photo-etched works.

For me, this project functioned as a diary of thoughts and images recorded during a year of painful transformation in Europe. Thus, the work posted warnings of all that was at stake in the search for peace and unification in Europe. In essence, this project was my attempt to put together some sense of how thin the line is between civilized and uncivilized behavior, between sanity and insanity. In my effort to come to terms with the reality I witnessed during this time I would often consult the *I Ching*. The readings I received spoke about darkness, danger and obstructions. *The Book of Changes* alluded to the fact that in such conditions even the good was compromised, as corroborated later by the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995 when 400 Dutch UN peacekeepers were helpless to intervene during the killing of over 8000 Bosnian men and boys. The commentary I obtained from the *I Ching* during that period was assembled into the catalog, which I created for my Amsterdam exhibition of *Private Parts* that year. The strength of the

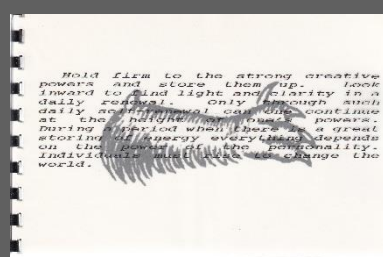
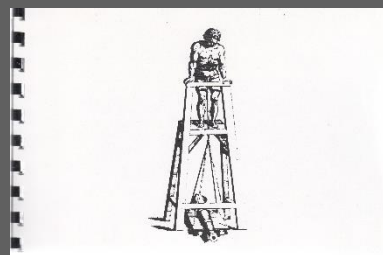
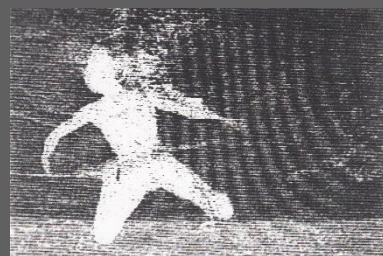
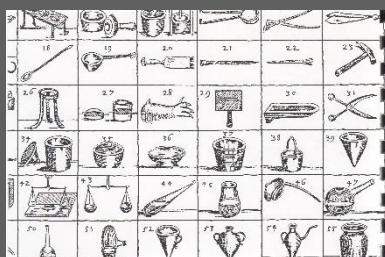
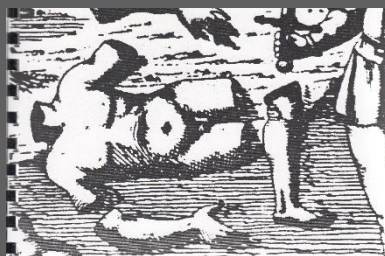


Malevolence, 1993



Ron Rocco

Private Parts - Rotterdam 1993



Private Parts Catalog, 1993

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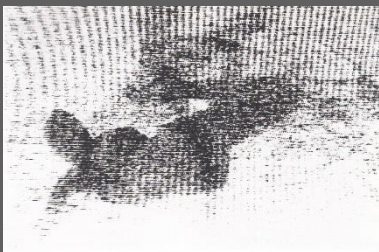
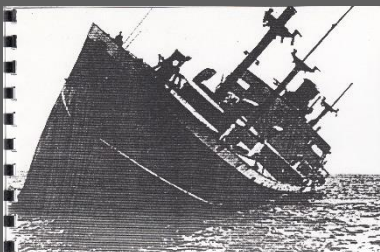
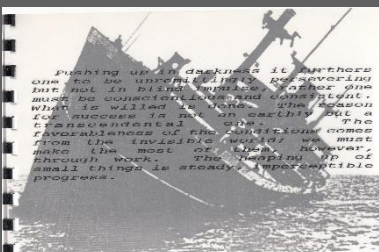
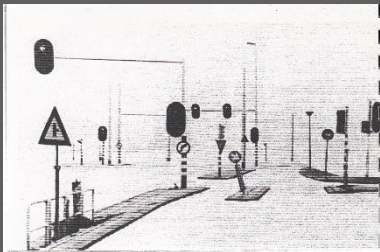
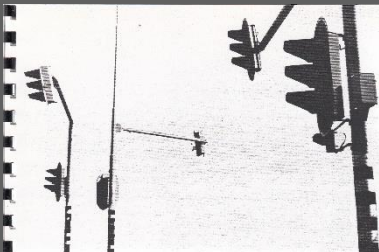
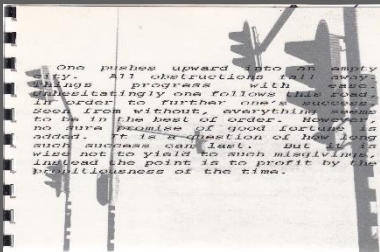
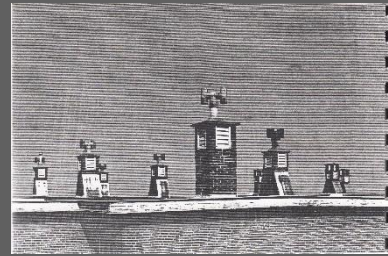
writings, overlaying the imagery I selected for this catalogue, led to the book itself being reviewed in the publication, **Umbrella** Volume 18, no.3 in August 1995 ISSN 0160-0699 as follows:

*"Ron Rocco's **Private Parts** Is a spiral bound bookwork, a kind of catalog created by the artist from an exhibition at Amsterdam's Warehouse Galerie, which is a book of advice with text taken from a reading of **The Book of Changes**. The text has vellum overlays which illustrate, through the artist's works of art, the text with memory, environment, and creativity. It is a wonderful catalog of positive philosophies. It is a book of meditation and contemplation."*

Elements from **Private Parts** went on to be displayed as part of the exhibition, **Luminous Bodies** at Brooklyn, New York's Rotunda Gallery in 1996. In that presentation, the title work from my earlier exhibition, another photo-etched construction, was described by the curator of **Luminous Bodies**, Dara Meyers Kingsley as follows:

"...Ron Rocco makes sculptures that are collages composed of disparate elements. Partly fabricated by the artist and partly

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM

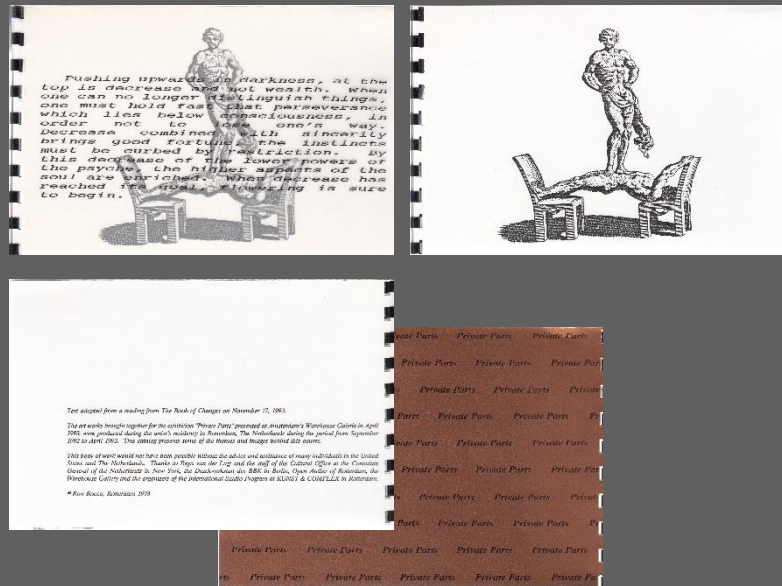


Private Parts Catalog, 1993

scavenged from European and American sources. Rocco's pieces are often meditations on identity, both individual and collective. The events in Europe over the last 10 years - barriers, both physical and ethnic, coming down and being built - have inspired Rocco to examine the precarious balances in society. The possibility of a swing in the collective and individual psyche from sane to insane, from rational to irrational, is what drives the content of *Private Parts* (1993) and *Trophy* (1994).

Private Parts is about the balance of forces that make up and define a human being, and how easy it is for one to fall into utter chaos. According to the artist the blue light in *Private Parts* represents the soul, both personal/individual (the artist's), and public/collective (Europe's). Light is the heart of the piece. The image of a swimmer floating upside down under water signifies a state of total weightlessness. With that weightlessness comes the paradoxical feeling of being at once unhindered in a state of total equilibrium, held by the water, and also a sense of chaos, of not knowing which way is up. Finding one's balance in the midst of the unknown is the struggle the artist has represented.

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM



Private Parts Catalog, 1993

A red and white pole is also included, similar to those used in Holland to measure fluid inside a truck and as barriers to block off roadways. The juxtaposition between potential chaos (swimmer, the individual) and order and control (the red and white pole, society) is the crux of the tension in the piece. The striped pole measures intervals of time, space and control. The pole represents boundaries, those between countries and between states of being.”²⁷

In reference to my use of urban virtu in my work Ms. Kingsley refers to a comment I made during my 1991 residence in Berlin regarding my use of U-Bahn train windows for my Berlin project.”²⁸

“Undeniably I have been influenced by the scale and weight of socialist realism found in the eastern parts of the city [Berlin]. For me it has also been essential to utilize pedestrian colors and forms taken from the city's transit systems. The works I have created employ imagery selected from the streets of the city with occasional visual reference to historical material.”²⁹

²⁷ From the catalog entry written by Dara Meyers Kingsley for the exhibition *Luminous Bodies* 1996

²⁸ From the catalog for *The Berlin Project* 1991

²⁹ Here Ms. Kingsley takes notes from: *The Berlin Project* Catalog published by Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (October 1991).

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM



Trophy, 1993

Another work from the exhibition *Private Parts* is my piece named, *Trophy*. This work consists of an etched bronze plate displaying a map of the ex-Yugoslav states. From the surface of this plate is pinned a lead wing, or feather-like structure with the drips of a single stream of painted blood. A large black structure projects from the upper surface of the plate and from it hangs eight black tentacles. At the bottom of each of these tentacles is placed a single holographic eye, which is illuminated. In her analysis of this work Ms. Kingsley goes on to describe this sculpture as follows: “*Trophy* is a memorial to war in the former Yugoslavia and a more literal work than *Private Parts*.”

*In Trophy little lamps inside a series of hanging cords illuminate hologram images of eyes. The eyes - usually the first thing we see when we look at another person - confront the spectator signifying a conscience that seems to demand moral responsibility. The front end of a wrecked car is used, looking very much like an octopus with an eye on each tentacle. Activated by light, these eyes bear witness to the ravages of war. In light truth is revealed.”*³⁰

30 Dara Meyers Kingsley (Statement from the exhibition, *Luminous Bodies* at The Rotunda Gallery, September 1996)

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM

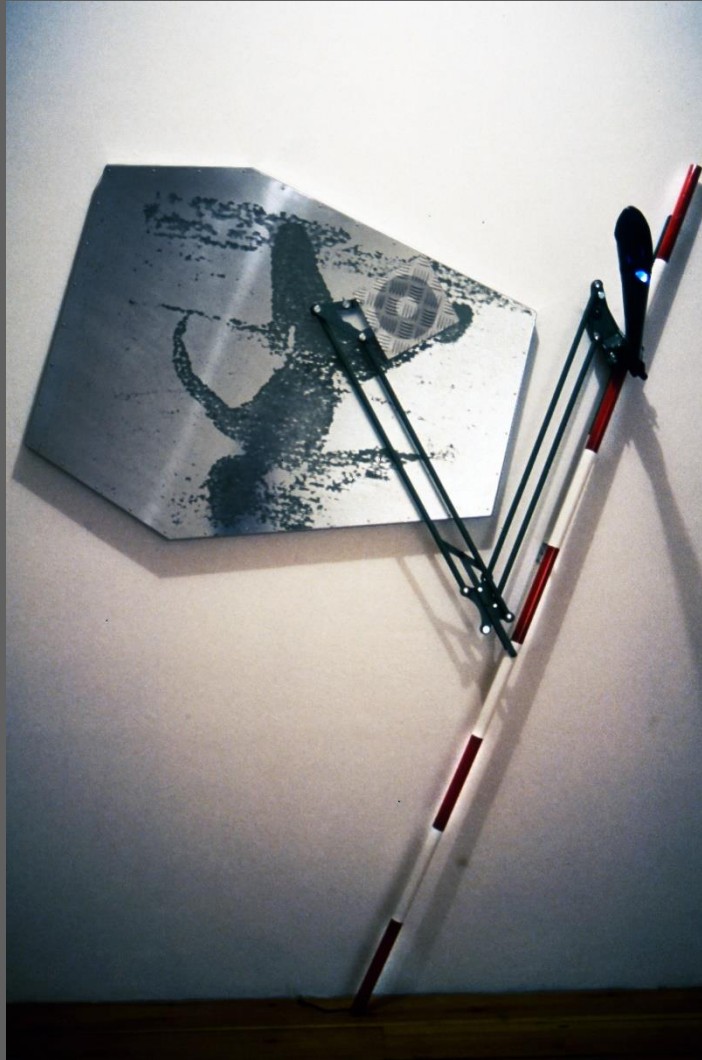


Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica*

Trophy was for me inspired by Pablo Picasso's painting, *Guernica*. As a small boy, I had seen the painting during several visits to the Museum of Modern Art, where it had been housed during the years of Francisco Franco's rule at Picasso's request, as he had wished that the painting not be delivered to Spain until democracy and liberty returned to the country.³¹ The painting was monumental in both its scale and its powerful imagery. What struck me in this work was the symbolic use of light. The triangular focal point of the painting is represented as the area of illumination beneath a bare light bulb and to its right an oil lamp is held by the figure of a woman peering into the carnage.³¹ I understood this symbolism to represent the eyes of the world bearing witness to the bloodshed. Therefore, in *Trophy* I chose to illuminate holographic eyes to represent the world as spectator to the acts of war and the atrocities that were unfolding in Eastern Europe.

³¹ Wikipedia: *Guernica*, referencing Timeline, part of a series of web pages on Guernica in PBS's *Treasures of the World* series. Accessed 16 July 2006.
http://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/guernica/gleve1_1/gtimeline.html

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM



Private Parts, 1993

In a review by *The New York Times*, art critic Holland Cotter,³² which says more about the expectations of the reviewer than the shortcomings of the artworks mentioned, Cotter writes, "*Light doesn't appear to be a crucial element in Ron Rocco's sculptures.*" Perhaps Mr. Cotter was expecting a work from American artist, James Turrell a California based artist whose work consists exclusively of light, when he visited the exhibition? It is true that only one small part of *Private Parts* employs light, but he seems to be missing the point that Ms. Kingsley makes in noting that, within the context of that work and even more so in *Trophy*, the illuminated elements and "*Light is the heart of the piece*"³³

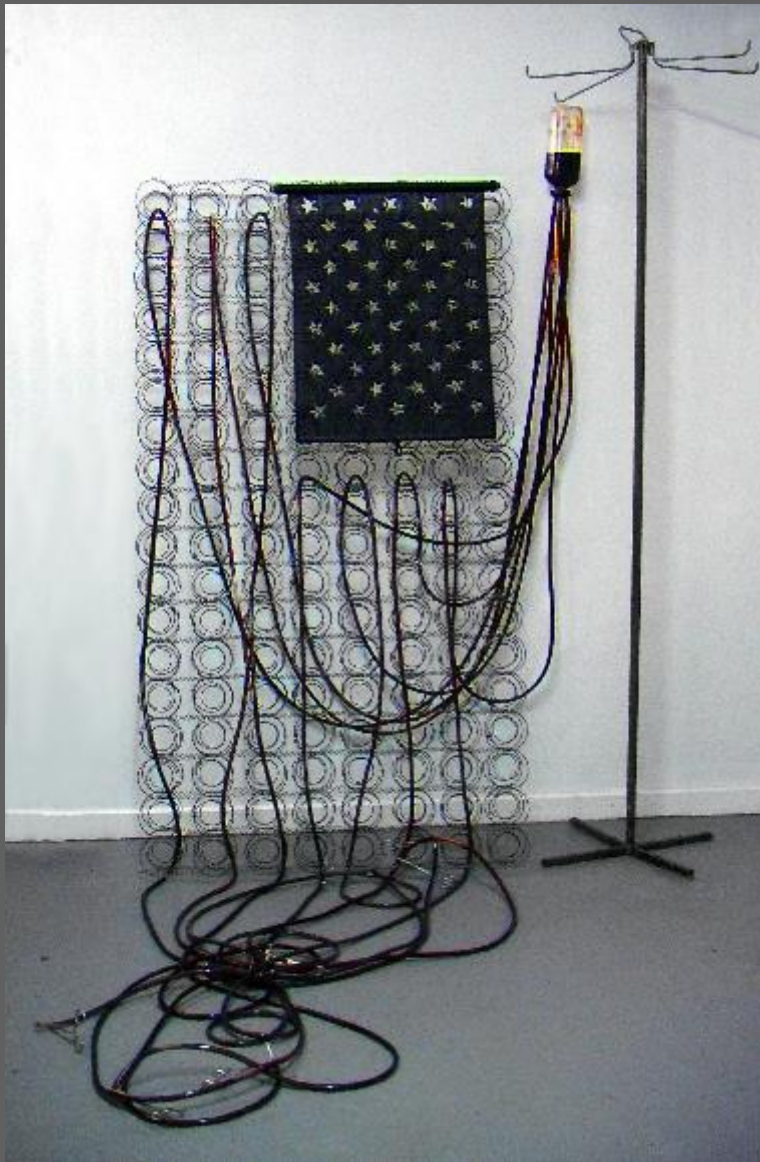
³² The New York Times, Art in Review: Luminous Bodies by Holland Cotter. October 4, 1996.

³³ Dara Meyers Kingsley (Statement from the exhibition, Luminous Bodies at The Rotunda Gallery, September 1996)

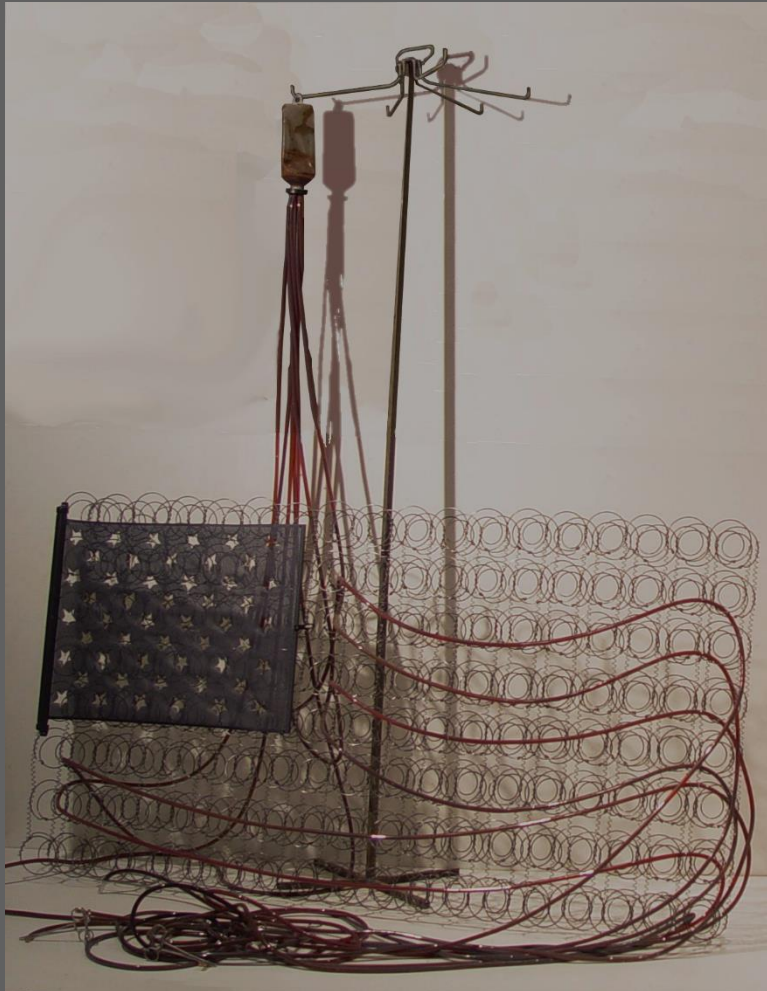
THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM

Bloody State from the project, *Amerika*

In residence in Berlin, Germany after 2006 my focus turned to the escalation of violence that pervaded the world followed the attacks on the World Trade Towers in New York on September 11, 2001. I was in New York City living down-wind of the burning towers in Brooklyn when the attacks occurred, so I had a visceral relationship with that event. I also witnessed the rise of militarism and state surveillance in the United States that followed. These factors furthered my decision to leave New York City and my long relationship with Berlin through my work at Künstlerhaus Bethanien and the BBK Druckwerkstatt (printmaking facilities of the BBK) provided me the cultural visa with which I could remain in Germany. It was at my Wrangelstraße studio that I began the series of sculptural works entitled, *Amerika*. This project sought to address the changes in American foreign policy and culture, and questioned the direction taken by then U.S. President, George W. Bush.



Bloody State, 2007



Bloody State, 2007

THE EMOTIVE POWER OF FORM

In my oeuvre, I consider two of my works masterpieces. The first is *Eviction Plan*, described later in this paper, and the second is *Bloody State* created in 2007 as part of this project. This sculptural installation consists of an American flag fabricated from a steel bedspring, from which a fabric automobile shade perforated with stars is attached. Through this construction are placed thin PVC tubes of artificial blood, which are used to delineate the stripes of this flag. The tubes are sealed at their bottom end by surgical clamps, which lie on the ground below the art work. The tubes originate from a hanging structure supporting a reservoir of the blood, similar to that which might be found in a hospital to provide for a blood transfusion.

The symbolism is visceral, as visceral as the events of September 11, 2001, when I queued on line for hours to give blood to aid the survivors, we had all hoped there would be. The symbolism of *Bloody State* speaks to both the bleeding away of life and American resources on senseless war, and the slaughter that was the result of those conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars



Domicile, 1995

As an artist I have been attracted to social themes. The Dada artist, "Hugo Ball expressed it, 'For us, art is not an end in itself ... but it is an opportunity for the true perception and criticism of the times we live in.'"³⁴

Some of my earlier art works have functioned within the tradition Ball describes as a critique of forces at work in contemporary society, but in the two described here they also function as an autobiographical statement. These works have their origin with my experiences at 508-510 East 12th Street in New York's Lower East Side, or Loisada. In summer of 1979, I moved to an apartment at that location and over the ensuing 18 months I became active in a tenant dispute over the negligence, and abuse of a corporate landlord who demanded illegal fees and allowed dangerous and unhealthy conditions to remain unfixed in these buildings.

To give an accurate representation of the environment surrounding this building I need to explain the circumstances adjoining these events, which influenced the creation of these

³⁴ Wikipedia: Dada <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dada>; referenced to DADA: Cities, National Gallery of Art, retrieved 2008-10-19

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars



Domicile, 1995

art works. New York City in the late 70's and early 80's was a battle ground. There were forces at work, which battled over control of urban resources. Drug dealers warred for control of the drug trade on city blocks. Landlords and tenants were engaged in conflicts over buildings with low living standards and dangerous conditions. Homelessness was rampant and in general people battled for survival. In 1980, the murder rate in New York was at the highest point it would reach in the period from 1960 to 1988. It was the highest murder rate in the country, if not the highest for any city in the world (not engaged in an outright war). If you visited some neighborhoods like Loisada and the South Bronx it did in fact look like a war zone with burned out and abandoned buildings everywhere. These neighborhoods reminded me of the East German (DDR) side of the Berlin Wall, where buildings destroyed in the Second World War remained as silent reminders of the war, up until German unification.

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

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Container (expanded) 1996

The website <http://www.disastercenter.com/crime/nycrime.htm> reports that in 1980 when New York City boasted a population of 7 million there were 180,000 violent crimes and 2,228 murders. That number would not be topped until 1988 when crack cocaine trafficking and related murders would push New York City into its most deadly 6-year period, with the crime rate at its highest in the city's recorded history and a murder rate in excess of 2600 people a year.

As was typical of New York at this time, my building was a mix of older long-time residents and newer tenants. The veterans of the neighborhood were mostly of Hispanic, or African American ethnicity with younger Caucasian artisans representing the newcomers. These artists included dancers, painters, and poets attracted to the neighborhood by the low rents and the presence of renowned American artists like beat poet, Allan Ginsberg and painter Larry Rivers who lived nearby. Also, for the poets the St. Mark's Poetry project, not far from this address, offered a chance for public presentation of their work and the establishment of a writer's community.



In the Domain of the Innocent 1999

35 For Sunday, August 31, 1980 Let us thank God that we have politicians, preachers, priests, policemen, people, psychologists, psychiatrists, a Pope, presidents, precedents, princes, poems, paintings, post offices, pens, puns, potatoes, palaces, prisons, paupers, plains, planes, so that there is plenty to do for the plotters and the plodders. Vis, can't remember what I intended to say this Sunday, except let us all try to remember to say our prayers every day, try to be good citizens of the U.S.A.. After all why not keep the mind on the tiebreaker puzzles. We hope to church in September. We wish everybody a happy Labor Day. We pray that we can get some painting done. We, I pray for Gods guidance. Apartment 11, tenant Miss Daisy L.

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars

One of the older tenants was a woman in her 40's or 50's named, Daisy. Daisy lived on the second floor, one floor below my apartment. Every Sunday morning and occasionally on other days, Daisy would write with a thick black marker on a large newsprint paper pad attached to her door. These writings wandered through many topics:³⁵ the cost of vegetables and chicken; conditions in the city including a subway transit strike; and in 1980 the upcoming presidential elections and the candidates running for political office. These writings were more like commentary than poetry, but many of the people in the building, some of whom were poets, saved these sheets of paper at the end of each day and regarded Daisy as some type of off-beat poet. In fact, Daisy had very little interaction with other tenants in the building; she had nothing to do with our tenant organization's activities and as far as we knew spent much of her time at home, with the exception of the food shopping, which brought her out into the neighborhood. As mentioned, the streets in our neighborhood could be treacherous, but on our block a group of young men 18 to 25 years of age were often on the street in front of their homes, keeping an eye on things and this kept us all safe. In fact, when I was presented to the local neighborhood Tenant organization to

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars



A Poet Dies on 12th Street 1982

35 continued: Apartment 11, Daisy. Should defrost refrigerator tonight. Need new frig sometime in 1980. If I win first or second prize and pay eight dollars, E I G H T D O L L A R S, I could also have a new large freezer. So what? So I need the computer list that I certainly paid for. Why have I not got it yet? Real reasons: no time for visitors, or one can pray to win what one needs. Vis, what some people think up to do.

For Sunday April 13th, 1980. One: the subway strike is over. How many including myself prayed that it would end soon. Let us pray for a hot May. Two: Huge yams at 19 cents per pound are extremely good now. Cut-up peeled and boiled until tender. Season as you like with butter, margarine, honey, or boil them in salted water of course.

which I went for legal counsel and support, the community organizer from my block introduced me to these young men and made it clear that I was to be protected, as I was undertaking services to the other tenants in my two buildings.

As mentioned, there were dangerous living conditions at 508-510 East 12th Street. Bathroom ceilings would often cave in, or collapse exposing water saturated and insect infested beams above. The front door lock to the building was broken and as a result anyone could enter the hallways. Heat and hot water were often not available and sometimes in the cold winter months there was no heat for several days at a time. Insect infestation in the apartments caused Asthma and other respiratory illnesses among the young children living there. To address these issues I was nominated to, and accepted the role of president of the building's Tenants Association. As such, I was the librarian for all the legal paperwork and documentation concerning these two buildings with 52 units.

Three: One can say the Lord's Prayer every day, twice a day, in the morning, in the evening. Four: People who thought the subway strike would last a long time were wrong. Five: Gambling is legal in some places. Some churches are not against gambling. I buy lottery tickets and sweepstake tickets. Some are free. So for what I have won hardly worth having. So what?...

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars



A Poet Dies on 12th Street 1982

The valise that I carried into New York City housing court became the receptacle for all the legal documents collected during the ensuing 1½ years of legal battles. As it turned out, these battles would result in our victory with a court decision, which granted permission for tenant management and eventual cooperative ownership of the buildings. What made this victory hollow and ironic though was the fact that a rapid deterioration of conditions in the Lower East Side in 1980 made tenant management untenable.

That year, the Democratic National Convention was held in New York City, as a result drug traffic and criminal activity in other parts of the city was suppressed by the N.Y.C. Police Department and all the major crossroads of lower Manhattan were manned with a big police presence to protect arriving Democratic representatives and politicians. This included Washington Square Park, Union Square and the more fashionable West Village, but neglected either by design, or by accident the politically disfavored Lower East Side. As a result, street conditions became extremely dangerous on East 12th Street.

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars



A Poet Dies on 12th Street 1982

These conditions forced many who supported tenant action in the neighborhood, but who had children to worry about, to leave the neighborhood for safer parts of the city. Even the group of young men, who watched the block, were no longer there to keep an eye on things. I myself was robbed at gun point and tied up in my apartment one evening when two young thugs followed me into my building.

On the morning of Saturday August 24, 1980 at around 12:30 I was walking home to my apartment at 510 East 12th Street, walking down the block between Avenue A and B when I realized I was being followed. As I approached my building, I quickly turned into the doorway hoping that the building lock had been repaired, as the broken lock on the outside door had never locked. Of course, it wasn't. Nothing, ever got fixed in this Lower East Side tenement. I hurriedly climbed the stairs to my third floor apartment very conscious of the two men who had just entered the hall and were now following me up the stairwell. By this time, I had studied martial arts for several years and was soon to become a Brown Belt in rank at my school. So I turned at the top of the stair to confront the men, thinking that with the high ground I would be capable of kicking them down the staircase.

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars

But then as the two men stepped onto the platform of the floor below me I saw that one of the men was holding a gun. That plan was not going to work. Now I was standing in front of my door, keys in hand having hoped to rush into my apartment before they could pursue me, but the gun now changed all that.

The men cornered me in front of my door and with a pistol to my head, and a knife to my back they said, "We want the money." Such fools, these guys were, they could not have picked a poorer target. In these days I was lucky if I had \$5 in my pocket. Of course people were killed for less in this city. I handed over what I had and made it clear I had nothing else. They gestured that they wanted me to open the door. At that moment a dozen thoughts ran through my head.

I remembered that in the morning the hall lamp had burned out. We had a long narrow hall at the entrance to our apartment along which my roommate and I kept our two bicycles. I rapidly could see what would play out as the man ahead of me with the knife went to reach for the pull chain. The guy with the gun would be behind me. The light would not go on of course and the door, which was some feet behind us would close leaving us in the total darkness.

At that moment I could pull the bikes over onto the guy in front and drop to the floor to confront the gun behind me, keeping low so that if this guy did shoot there would be more of a chance he would hit his partner than shoot me. But then, I remembered that my roommate was home in bed that night, along with his new girlfriend. I could not endanger their lives as well as mine in executing this plan. In fact, the scenario I had envisioned did occur and when the darkness enveloped us there was panic in the voices of the two men as the one behind me rushed back to open the front door again, to let in the hallway light. I calmly walked into the apartment to turn on the kitchen light. By this time my roommate, Myles and his girlfriend were awake and were startled by the commotion of our entry. In the stupor of sleep Myles began an argument with the two men as they confronted him. He clearly did not realize the danger of the situation at that moment.

I told my roommate to back off, otherwise he was going to get seriously hurt as the man with the gun began to pistol whip him in the face. They went through our rooms looking for something to steal. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, as my roommate was a photographer they found two cameras in his bedroom.

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars



A Poet Dies on 12th Street 1982

When they arrived in my bedroom they saw my karate belts which I left adorning the wall there, this along with the gloves and kicks that I brought to classes. This made the two nervous. They said they wanted to tie us up. This was a critical moment. I had to judge their intentions correctly. If they were going to kill us then now was the moment to fight. On the other hand, if their intent was just to leave safely without the risk of me attacking them then compliance would be the safe thing to do for all concerned. But I had to get this right because once in bondage I would lose my ability to change the situation. My mind became an antenna, picking up clues to my opponents intentions and fears. I sensed that the karate gear had really shaken them. They just wanted a safe exit, so I consented to being bound. And that was the correct path, as they then just turned around and left.

At the time of our hard-won victory, these really bad conditions had existed for several months and the tenant base needed to undertake building management had eroded significantly. The undertaking had to be abandoned. Eventually I left the Lower East Side and moved to a friend's apartment on Mulberry Street in Little Italy.

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars



A Poet Dies on 12th Street 1982

Little Italy, roughly defined as Mulberry, Mott and Elizabeth Streets south of Houston Street and north of Canal Street in Manhattan, itself was no safe haven from criminal activity, but here this was organized crime. Mulberry Street was home to one of the 'Social Clubs' of the Mafia, at this time run by Paul Castellano of the Gambino crime family. Here it was controlled chaos compared to the random street violence of the Lower East Side. Mafia affairs were certainly the case on the evenings when I would walk home to my apartment at 280 Mulberry, just below Houston Street, and find a late model Cadillac in flames in the narrow alleyway behind the Puck building. I still remember the thick black smoke billowing up into the evening sky through the rows of metal shutters on the back of the building. At the time, I was compelled to speculate the reason for these events, because such arsons were never to be found in the local news, or otherwise in the Press. Was it the aftermath of a hit? The get away car for an assassination, or destruction of evidence from a high stakes robbery? I doubt if even NYPD knew the answer. I'd call in the event to the Police Department, but a patrol car was hardly ever summoned, and I am not even sure the Fire Department bothered to come, encapsulated as the car was between the brick and stone walls of lower Manhattan's canyons.

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In that neighborhood, at that time it was just part of the scenery, a little local color. Down the block at 129 Mulberry stood Umbertos Clam House scene of the April 1972 murder of mobster “Crazy” Joe Gallo who was shot and killed while seated with his wife, sister and daughter at a table in a back corner. (<https://allthatsinteresting.com/new-york-mob-murders>) One time, I was answering an ad while looking for an apartment in the neighborhood. I called with a request to see the place, which was located in one of the corner buildings at Mulberry and Grand Streets. I was told I would need to wait for 'the boss' who took afternoon naps at Umbertos and could not be disturbed. Finally, the boss's men came to meet me at the building, which overlooked the strategic center of Little Italy. As we ascended the stairs old Italian women dressed head to toe in black, under head scarves and black dresses peered from behind chained doors, or scurried from the hallway into the dark corners of their apartments as we approached. I could not help but think of all these peering eyes, which would be recording every passage in the hallway that I, or my guests would make if I live there. They would be all seeing, all knowing, and I am sure the boss would share in their insights.

When we arrived at the apartment on the top floor, I saw a large open space, almost loft-like, but with a full bank of windows that straddled both the Mulberry and the Grand Street exterior walls. The space was bare except for a dozen mattresses scattered along the walls. This was clearly a flop house, perhaps for the boss's foot soldiers, a place to chill when things were too hot on the streets after a hit, or when NYPD might be motivated. It was in a great position to see all the goings on in Little Italy and made it easy to make a quick presence if needed. Needless to say, I opted out of the apartment rental, as it was clear there would be no negotiation with anyone, should the boss decided to remove me. Such was the character of this neighborhood at the time. Just once did the violence of the streets manifest within my building, when one evening a gun shot rang out in the hallway outside my door, followed by the sound of someone running down the stairs to the street below. Later, I carefully opened the door to see a trail of blood splattered down the stairs.

I returned to Loisada about two years later. There I discovered that several tenants at 508-510, including Daisy had been killed in the violent assaults that took place on that block after my departure. My sculptural installation entitled, *A Poet Dies on 12th Street* is a memorial to her.

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars



A Poet Dies on 12th Street 1982

I collected some of her writings and made a recording as I narrated what she had written. This recording is heard very faintly inside the vinyl bag, which is part of the installation. The written pages and some old letters are found as well inside the bag, bound together inside of a small bamboo cage, which has been charred and burned on its edges. A bright fluorescent tube passes through this bundle of papers and is designed to flash intermediately, filling the bag and the surrounding enclosure with light. The whole work is suspended from a black metal support, which is fastened to the back wall of a niche especially designed for this installation.

Later, in the mid 1980's, a Police cleanup known as 'Operation Pressure Point' was focused on the Lower East Side and forced out the criminal elements. By this time many of the contested buildings like 508-510 had been scooped up by the large Real Estate developers who could now buy these properties at bargain prices from the city, because the possibility of tenant management no longer existed, and thus the gentrification of the Lower East Side began. The Lower East Side, or the East Village as it was more often being called with its new trendy art galleries and cafes would become the next big real estate boom.³⁷

³⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/02/18/arts/success-stories-of-two-galleries-in-emerging-art-neighborhoods.html>



A photo from my *Arson Series #5*, 1989

38 At the 1993 Venice Biennale Hans Haacke was selected as the artist representing Germany. For that exhibition Haacke had the marble tile floor of the German Pavilion torn up with the broken pieces scattered over the floor of the exhibition hall. As visitors passed over these elements the hall filled with the sound of clattering stone pieces. The effect was intense and extremely unnerving, pointing to Haacke's suggestion of Germany's torn social fabric a reference to the years of the Nazi Third Reich and the following 44 years that saw the country divided. For this work Haacke shared a Golden Lion with Nam June Paik for the best pavilion of the 1993 Venice Biennial. See the image of the German Pavilion in the Conclusion section of this paper.

39 "In one of his best-known works, which quickly became an art historical landmark, *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*, Haacke took on the real-estate holdings of one of New York City's biggest slum landlords. The work exposed, through meticulous documentation and photographs, the questionable transactions of Harry Shapolsky's real-estate business between 1951 and 1971." Wikipedia: Hans Haacke http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Haacke

40 From my interview with Nathan Kensinger for his blog: *Photography / The Abandoned & Industrial Edges of New York City. This Building Has A Story*

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars

The valise and its contents remained with me over the years. In 1989, I was surprised to discover that a German artist, Hans Haacke,³⁸ whose work I highly respect for its social content, had also been involved in documenting the history of 508-510 and had produced one of his classic exposes on the building in the early 1970's.³⁹ I telephoned him and he encouraged me to pursue working with the documents I had in my possession. The valise remained on my worktable at my 59 Harrison Avenue studio in Williamsburg, Brooklyn for some months that year. Then in July my studio, as well as two other living spaces in the building were set on fire.

Assessed by the Fire Department as arson, a long running dispute with my landlord and ambiguous warnings from his associates led us, as well as insurance investigators to believe the fire was owner initiated. "It was like 9:30 in the morning and all of the sudden I see this big black billowing smoke coming up from the floorboards...nobody died, or was injured but there was huge amounts of structural damage. I had a 20 foot by 10 foot hole in my floor in two spaces. All my walls were collapsed. ...There is so much history in this place, there is so much violence in the process of what happened to this building"⁴⁰



Eviction Plan 1990

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars

This final assault in New York's real estate wars spurred my completion of this project. I searched the debris and broken glass in the fire damaged studio for the valise and rescuing the art work, accumulated the broken glass for inclusion among the photos, legal papers, rubber stamps and other items in the sculpture. The fire gave me the idea for the final element for this work, which I now planned to name, *Eviction Plan*. I used a brilliant red neon spiral to divide the contents of the valise and set it visually ablaze.



Fish Magic 1990

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Two works of social history from New York's Real Estate wars

An interesting review exists from the *Greenline press*, a local Brooklyn based arts publication, which not only documents the reviewer's experience of *A Poet Dies on 12th Street* and several other of my artworks, but also gives an impressions of my studio building and its environs after the fire of 1989.⁴¹ There is also a brief mention of *Eviction Plan* from the review of the exhibition: *25 Years of Visual Arts at Purchase* written by William Zimmer and published by *The New York Times* in 1996.⁴²

41 *GREENLINE* May 1990 Celebration-Artists Exhibit in Local Lofts by Eszter Szalczar "...The spaces are in a building known as Bernadette's Salvage Co. because of a sign that remains on the door from a business that used to be here. The building on Harrison Avenue, near Broadway, is on a desolate block with litter, debris and broken glass, vestiges of the fire that burned down the synagogue that used to be on the ground floor...As I stepped into the building seemingly in ruins, and caught the first glimpse of the semi-dark space of the first room, I felt an atmosphere pervaded with creative energies. There was no sense of commercialism or any trace of fashionable trends. The artists appeared to just offer themselves, exposing their own concerns and experiments with ideas and images. I felt as if I'd stepped into a lab of Alchemists since most of the works are connected to the subject of transformation communication between different states and levels of being...Ron Rocco works deal with cosmic images in the sense of time and space. Walking about them is like catching signals from other worlds around and inside oneself. In A Warning to my Friends the rhythm of the universe is rendered by a rotating skeleton fixed at the feet and viewed from the head on a video screen- With this the artist set up an analogy between macrocosm and microcosm. A wooden bar behind the video set tipping over in an extreme slow motion creates the feeling of measuring time in a timeless process. Another composition by Rocco is based on fishes. They float as if on an ocean of memories- The water is captured in Plexiglas a crystallized flow of thoughts. The entire sculpture is illuminated by a violet fluorescent light which seems to evoke recollections from subconscious regions of the mind. A third work of Rocco's A Poet Dies on 12th Street is also about time and timelessness. In a plastic bag there is a cassette player broken in pieces and we hear a rasping voice reading poems. It probably the voice of a dead person or that of an immortal poet preserved in a file. Here again, ironically different levels of existence collide.

42 *The New York Times, Art* - 3 Shows focus on College's Past - Review by William Zimmer. Published October 13, 1996.

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

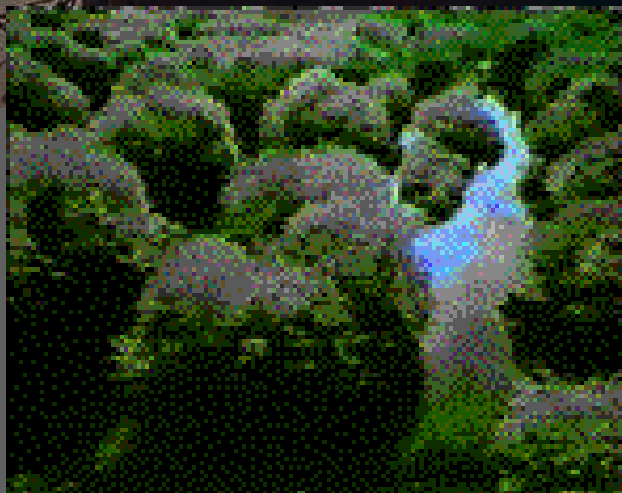
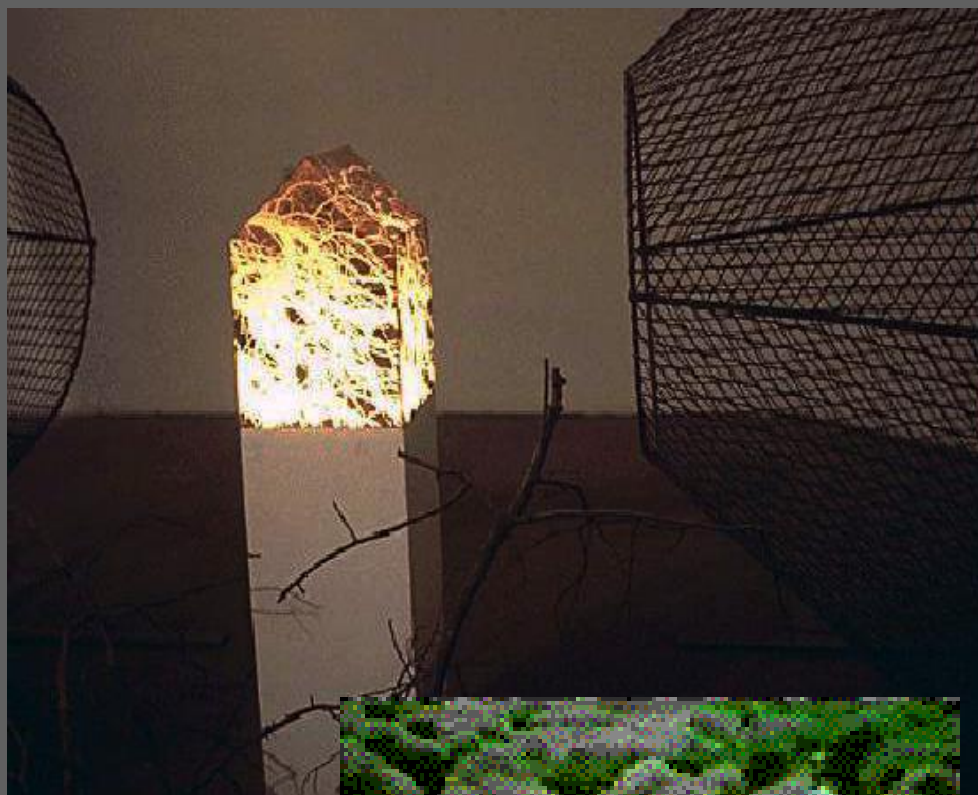
The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight



The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight, 1990

Two of my major installation works can be linked by a common theme addressing our collective stewardship of planet Earth. These two are *The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight* and my 2010 installation, *Shake Up!* Both reflect a concern that our management of global natural resources needs to be corrected. The Horizon project, described in further detail below, takes on this issue as a suggestion of a different view for our relationship with the Earth and its bounty. The second work, *Shake Up!* was conceived in drawings and study elements begun in 1997, but was not actualized until more than a decade later because its message, a wake-up call drawing attention to the dire nature of our global situation, felt too dark and pessimistic in its assessment, in the 90's.

In the spring of 1990, I was asked by curator, Charlotta Kotik of the Brooklyn Museum to create a work, which would fill one of the museum's contemporary art galleries for the exhibition, *Working in Brooklyn*. My ambition was to use the installation at the museum to address the precarious state of our shared relationship with the natural environment. The title for the work, *The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight*,



The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight, (video detail) 1990

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

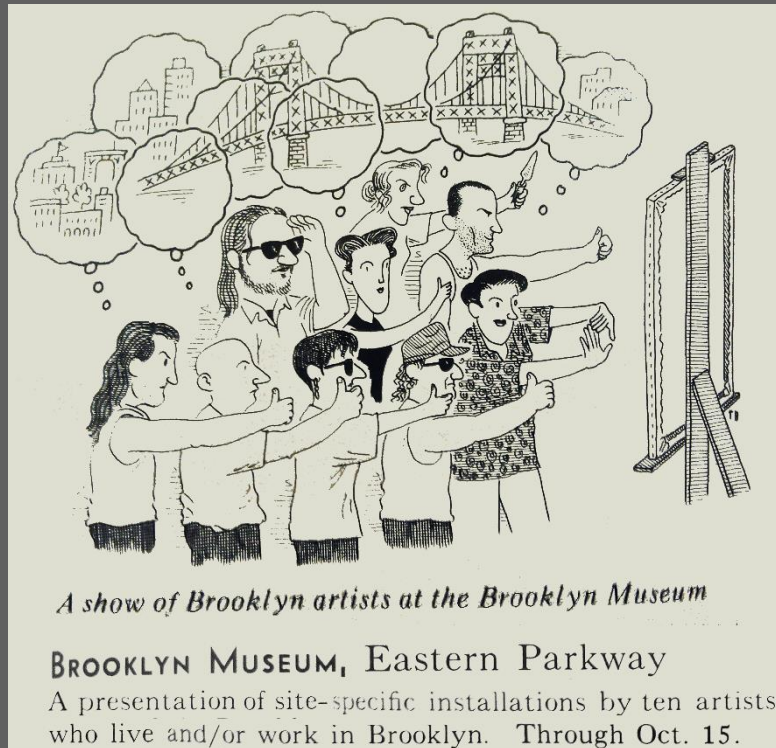
The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight

was extracted from the funeral eulogy for the mother of my former wife, Elizabeth Estabrook. Shirley Wood was a much-loved naturalist and writer resident on Block Island, Rhode Island. This work, which stands as a memorial to her spirit, was inspired by her continuous efforts to bring parcels of land into conservancy on that island. The installation consists of three elements assembled within the darkened room.

At the entrance to the installation a video monitor stands before a labyrinth of steel barricades, tree branches and underbrush. Beyond these obstructions stand the third element: a luminous copper house-like structure imprinted with the pattern of tree branches through which light is transmitted. The technology used in the construction of this element originated in the computer industry. A circuit board - a copper-coated laminate over fiberglass - was photographically processed and then acid-etched to reveal the underlying translucent surface in the pattern of the tree branches. Six panels were then constructed into the house-like structure and illuminated from within to display the organic framework. The video monitor, which the viewer encounters first upon entering the room, sets the mood

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight



Cartoon of the artist (far right) and 8 other artists in the exhibition, from *The New Yorker Magazine* August 20, 1990 *Goings on About Town* Pg. 12

⁴³ Jeanne Greenberg quoted from the catalog for the exhibition *Working in Brooklyn-Installations*, The Brooklyn Museum, 1990

and cadence for the approach to the installation. The video screen depicts a dense landscape of underbrush and ponds.

The image, a looped 30-second computer sampled segment of video footage, attempts to recreate the strange sense of distortion I encountered in a dream where a flat terrain warped up into view obscuring the horizon. In the video segment selected the perspective drops from a few dozen feet above the ground to the edge of a continuously approaching topography. A complete shot of the landscape is never shown, although one expects the camera to rise above the horizon line at any moment. The perspective in this video, viewed from above while moving rapidly across the wooded terrain is interrupted only by the reflection of blue sky in the ponds below. The images, which have been altered with an image processor, have a color and texture that is odd and unfamiliar. They have been described by art critic Jeanne Greenberg as, "*making the landscape appear self-generating with its Kelly greens, stark whites, and fluorescent blues.*"⁴³ This modulation of color and juxtaposition of earth and sky is a recurrent theme of mine, a metaphor for disorder. Here in this installation the video tape

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight



The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight, (detail) 1990

43 Jeanne Greenberg quoted from the catalog for the exhibition Working in Brooklyn-Installations, The Brooklyn Museum, 1990

hints at a horizon which is implied in the distance. But this horizon is never seen and it is this that generates the viewer's urgency of expectation.

As Greenberg points out, "*This tape, then, with its relentless movement and saturating view, becomes a primer for the tension between the work and the viewer.*"⁴³

During my study of the archaeology of technology, under the guidance of Heather Lechman at M.I.T. the word 'horizon' was used in reference to a breakthrough, the moment when a limit to the range of perception, knowledge, or skill was overcome by a people. I have chosen to use this term to suggest the possibility of a new understanding regarding our relationship with the Earth, a new human-ecological balance. My interest is to use the 'horizon' to exemplify our transformation.

The installation, thus serves to represent our conceptual limits, which create dual worlds of man and nature, separate and antagonistic. The work also alludes to the metamorphosis of our conceptions to a point where both worlds become a coherent whole.

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight



The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight, (detail) 1990

The separation is, in fact, just another construction of man. This quest to find the horizon, to come to some fixed point of tranquility, is what finally leads one away from the interminable passage through the video landscape.

At this moment it is the copper object glowing in the distance that draws one's attention. This house-like icon is framed from this vantage-point by the seven-foot square steel barricade which, although it remains a physical obstruction to passage toward the object, contains a cone-shaped surface which recedes from the viewer funneling vision to the icon beyond.

The viewer now has two methods of approach. From each side of the barricade, a corridor is defined. On one side I delineate this corridor with the unbroken length of the steel mesh, an imposing man-made barrier. On the other side the steel mesh barricade is broken only to be replaced by a large tangle of brush and fallen branches, a natural obstruction, which is no less an impediment to one's passage. Together they portray an enigma which envelops the copper object. This house-like icon is the viewer's 'golden temple'.

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight



The Horizon is Nothing More Than the Limit of Our Sight, (detail) 1990

It enshrines the aggregate of concepts each of us brings with us germane to home, community, and civilization.

On both physical and metaphorical levels, the house and its brilliant surface unites the spheres of man and nature. In resolving to navigate the maze of barriers, with the goal of reaching the lit house, the spectator symbolically confronts our labyrinthine impressions of nature, which up until now have isolated us from it. With a view fixed upon the copper surface of the solitary icon one finds direction. In conclusion, it is during the exploration of this psychic boundary that one can approach a meaningful ecology.

And as Greenberg concludes, "*Upon completing the voyage, one finds spiritual completion within the house and the energy it emits.*"⁴³

⁴³ Jeanne Greenberg quoted from the catalog for the exhibition *Working in Brooklyn-Installations*, The Brooklyn Museum, 1990

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Shake Up!



Shake Up!, 2010

My installation *Shake Up!* was undertaken as a solo exhibition organized by curator Lynn del Sol of {CTS} creative thrift shop in conjunction with the Dam Stuhltrager Gallery in Brooklyn, New York, as the fourth exhibition in its series of the gallery's sponsorship program *East/West Project*, in February of 2010.

In *Shake Up!* a 400-pound house composed entirely of wax and waste is used to examine the concepts of home, community and civilization. This is juxtaposed with an overhead video projection, which envelopes the house-like structure. The video portrays the impending violence of a storm, as it illuminates the wax surface with an oscillating positive and negative image of the wind-blown leaves and branches of a tree. Thus, the work hints at an encroaching calamity of global proportions and is meant as a loud cry in warning for all to wake up to this danger. In an artist interview conducted by {CTS} creative thrift shop for a promotional video they produced I stated, "*Shake Up!* has its history as being inspired by a large exhibition space at the Brooklyn Museum and in the context of that space I envisioned a waterfall. It's a waterfall of vinyl, and on that are the tire treads of various vehicles motorcycles, trucks, and large cars.

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Shake Up!

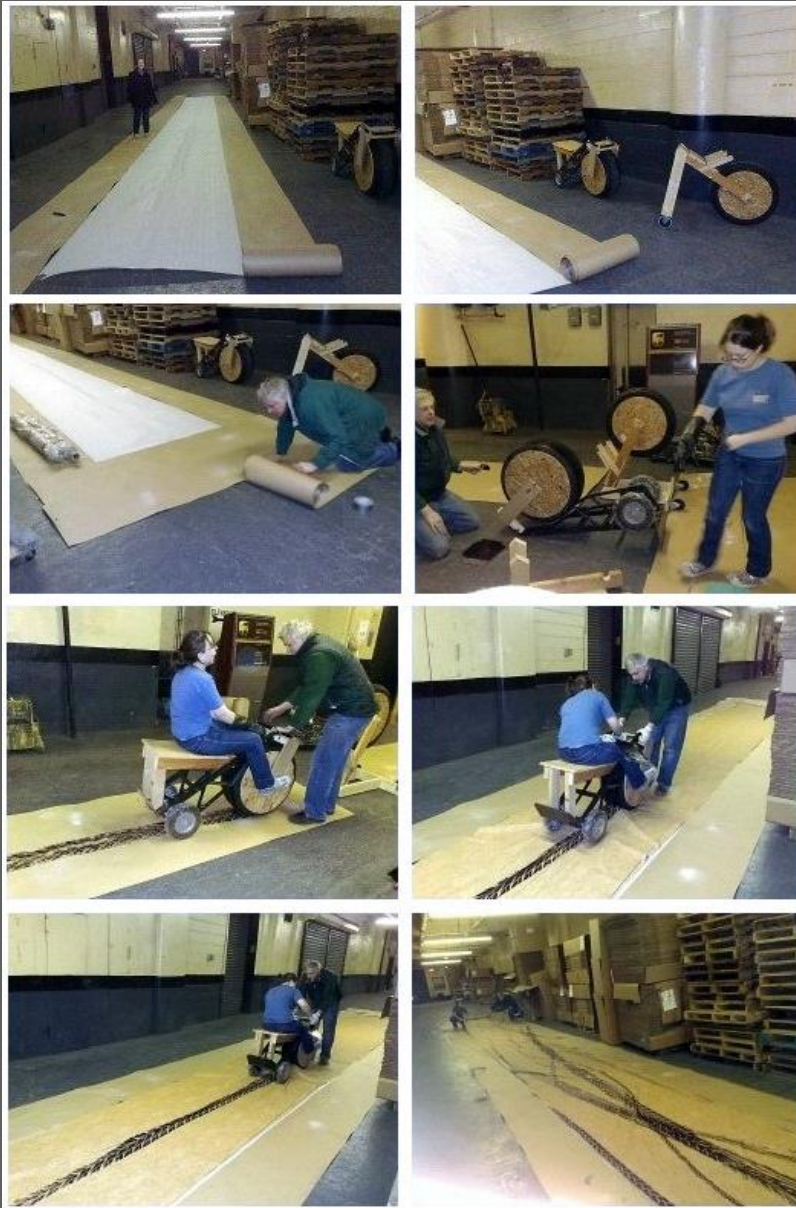


Shake Up!, (detail) 2010

The symbolism of this waterfall of vehicular traffic is the way our natural spaces, our natural landscapes are being sub-divided into ever smaller bio-spheres that no longer can sustain the wildlife that used to inhabit them. Shake Up! is a combination of elements, there is a large aluminum plate, which is on the wall, it's photo-etched. The plate has been etched with the image of caribou, an image of vast herds of animals that no longer exist.

The third element in this piece is a large wax house. It weighs about 400 lbs it is Micro-crystalline wax and it encases materials that are typical for most urban streets, compressed cardboard. The form itself, as one will find in some of my earlier works references civilization, references society and all the aggregate concepts that we bring to the idea of home. By encapsulating this waste into that format, it sort of identifies the fact that we are living more and more with our own waste materials.

When one thinks about the natural environment, that say your great grandfather knew 150 years ago and compare that with the natural environment we have today, it's a very different thing. I think the shock for me was actually when I went out West the first time.



Making the vinyl element for Shake Up! with my daughter, Madeline Estabrook Rocco

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Shake Up!

I had visions of vast landscapes hundreds of miles without a single person around and found that there was actually a settlement every 20 miles, or so. I was really kind of surprised by that.

So, those kinds of remote places are vanishing fast. There are some in our National Parks, but even those have been whittled away in the past few decades, if it's not for oil production, or mining, or forestry then it's for something else. Natural unspoiled wilderness is a rare commodity.

This is the first time this installation has ever appeared in public. It's been worked out in concept in 1997 in my studio at the time, and had been setup for documentation of the elements more for my own reference in making a presentation to the Brooklyn Museum itself and other curators. So as a result, it was quite a surprise to see how all the elements came together in its final rendering. So, as much as it is a surprise for the public, it was also for me. I feel that somehow it's really very tightly organized; very tightly put together and I think the space here at {CTS} really suited it very well."



Zuider Median 1989 as installed at The Katonah Museum of Art

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The Waterline Project

My three outdoor sculptures from *The Waterline Project*, also address environmental themes, in this case the unique relationship of The Netherlands and specifically Amsterdam to earth, sea and sky by virtue of that city's location two to five meters below sea level.

Created for the Dutch foundation ArtGarden, it was produced with the joint support of The Netherlands-America Foundation, Art Matters, The New York Foundation for the Arts and The Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, Martin Air Holland, Regency Art Transfer of New York and the generous assistance of the Dutch Consulate to the United States, and The Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of New York. It comprised three outdoor sculptures set in a park-like environment.

This work provided a reference point, from which we can see just how extreme human manipulation of the natural world has been. Indeed, awe inspiring, yet also calling into question the fragility of our built environment in light of rising sea levels, due to global warming.



The Waterline Project 1989 as installed at The Katonah Museum of Art

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The Waterline Project

The title piece of the exhibition, *Waterline Project* is constructed of steel, fiberglass, wood, Plexiglas, organic materials and light elements, which are placed above the viewer at a theoretical sea level.

Apertures in this work transmit daylight, permitting a mirror below the sculpture to reflect the sky. Changing light conditions alter the appearance of this sculpture throughout the day, highlighting the elements against the natural surroundings. The work comes to life in twilight and early evening hours when light level changes are greatest and the silhouette of the construction masks the sky.

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Bail Out



Bail Out 2009 as installed at Boffo Foundation

In 2009 I was approached by the Boffo Foundation with a request to design an installation for an exhibition at their facility on the Brooklyn waterfront. The resulting art work entitled, *Bail Out* is a comic intervention, referencing the financial crisis of 2008 and the resulting bail out of the financial institutions deemed, 'to big to fail'.

The installation questioned the accounting that resulted in the rescue of Wall Street in a humorous work, which included an overturned accountant's ledger, the spilled cyphers, and a gold lined parachute with its requisite air blower.



NeoCon Light Camo Structure 2018 as installed at Art City Zhuhai

With my change of the title, came some alterations from the study for this installation. Clothing was added to replace the camouflage net seen in the study. This was to symbolize the garments of the Palestinian people killed on that day, also 63 black stones were placed in a circle, each anchoring a paper sheet, upon which is printed the pattern of the traditional Palestinian head scarf, or keffiyeh.

REFERENCING SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

NeoCon Light Camo Structure

This artwork began as a study, constructed in 2007 at my Berlin, Germany studio. In 2018 when I was asked to install this art work for the Art City Zhuhai exhibition in China several events had occurred on the world stage that instigated my change of the title for this piece. The resulting installation was renamed, ***NeoCon Light Camo Structure / the Shame and the Sorrow of May 14, 2018.***

With this change, my intent was to use this art work to address the relocation of the U.S. Embassy building for Israel to a location in East Jerusalem on land illegally occupied by the Israeli government, which went into effect on that date. This was an event that triggered large protests by the Palestinian people that day, resulting in the killing of 63 civilians in the occupied territories.



Study for ***NeoCon Light Camo Structure*** 2007

CONCLUSION

My work as an educator

As Joseph Beuys expressed, in his 1969 interview with Willoughby Sharp, when he said, “*teaching is my greatest work of art*”⁴⁴ I also feel my greatest contribution at this time comes in my role as an educator. Presenting the idea of living creatively, and providing access to my experiences is something I offer my students in the hope that they too may find their own path. This is coupled with the observation that artworks, body-language and performance, written documents and presentations can be used to channel creative energy in the individual, as well as in a social setting to help bring about positive change. These ideas are presented as a process of empowerment, which opens the door of hope to many and offers a window for progress. The idea is to lay the groundwork for an understanding that within each individual there is a rich landscape of psychic energy, including symbols and dreams the acknowledgement of which is important for both the health of the individuals and a society.

44 Sharp, Willoughby 1969 Interview as quoted in Energy Plan for the Western Man, Joseph Beuys in America, compiled by Carin Kuoni, Four Walls Eight Windows, New York 1993, p. 85.



TEDx Xiangzhou presentation 2016

CONCLUSION



L'oeuvre de Louise Bourgeois.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Barney's exhibition clearly made numerous gestures to Beuys's earlier retrospective at the Guggenheim and having seen Barney's work over time, it is clear he sees himself in the Beuys-like model. Barney's installation at Documenta IX in Kassel, Germany solidified his European presence while making it clear that like Beuys he is a sculptor of actions, installation and performance. "He is influenced above all by the art of the 70s and he has drawn stimuli from its most important protagonists." Writes the Documenta IX GUIDEBOOK concerning Barney's work.

⁴⁶ Art curator and writer Francesco Bonami explains in his *The Legacy of a Myth Maker*, "Contemporary artist Thomas Hirschhorn's takes Beuys as a major source of influence. Hirschhorn's work often has a social agenda with a political undertone."

⁴⁷ Wikipedia: Social Sculpture http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_sculpture

⁴⁸ Self-Portrait by Man Ray ISBN: 9780141195506, 1963 London: Andre Deutsch.

⁴⁹ Tomkins, Calvin: *Duchamp: A Biography*, Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1996. ISBN 0-8050-5789-7

⁵⁰ Andre Breton, *Magus of Surrealism* by Anna Balakian, published June 1st 1971 by Oxford University Press. On the strength of my interest in Breton and Surrealism, I met with the author to discuss her experiences as a young woman meeting Breton and the other Surrealist artists in Paris.

⁵¹ Louise Bourgeois en 1990, derrière sa sculpture en marbre Eye to Eye, 1970. Photo: Raimon Ramis

After 40 years of work, it is no small task to attempt to identify every force that impacted my creative path. In truth, a full accounting is not really possible, but some of the more significant sources have been addressed here. In essence, it was as I said Beuys's suggestion of the artist as shaman that influenced my navigation toward that role in my early performance-based work. As with many artists including American sculptor and video artist, Mathew Barney,⁴⁵ Swiss installation artist Thomas Hirschhorn⁴⁶ and filmmaker John Halpern it was Beuys's concept of 'social sculpture'⁴⁷ that would be important in understanding my projects that followed.

Additionally, I have been informed by my reading of biographical material from artists like Man Ray⁴⁸ and Marcel Duchamp.⁴⁹

My first inclining of what I have come to understand as the emotive power of form has been reinforced by my readings of Carl G. Jung, my interest in the *I Ching* and from my examination of the life of the surrealist poet Andre Berton,⁵⁰ and my conversations with his biographer, Anna Balakian. Artists who display an understanding of the emotive power of form are the German surrealist Meret Oppenheim, whose work I was introduced to by my Berlin art dealer, Irena Nalepa, and French sculptress, Louise Bourgeois who I met twice during visits to her

CONCLUSION



Artist Hans Haacke's German Pavilion as seen during the 1993 Venice Biennale.

home in the Chelsea district of New York City. Bourgeois hosted a salon at her home on Saturday mornings. Coaxed by a German artist friend, I made my first visit to see her sometime in 1999-2000. During this visit she viewed the contact sheet images for my Structures of Detention series of prints. These were very warmly received by both Bourgeois and her son, a social activist. Thus, I was invited for a second meeting. I took advantage of that opportunity to see Louise again several years later, this time in the company of Robert Buck, ex-Director of the Brooklyn Museum, Kimberly Marrero a New York and Miami based curator and art consultant and Michelle Han, who worked at the Carnegie Foundation's Education Department at the time.

In pointing to artists who I admire for their engaging work in the social sphere, I would identify German, ZERO group artist Hans Haacke, who I met later in my career, through my former classmate and friend, artist Fred Wilson.

CONCLUSION



Portrait of Fred Wilson, February 2005 Photo
by: Kerry Ryan McFate courtesy
PaceWildenstein Gallery

Fred is himself someone whose work, “encourages viewers to reconsider social and historical narratives and raises critical questions about the politics of erasure and exclusion. Beginning with the groundbreaking and critically acclaimed exhibition *Mining the Museum* (1992-93) at the Maryland Historical Society.”⁵²

I would, of course, add to this list of dynamic socially engaged artists many of my collaborators and partners in the various projects discussed earlier. In the vast landscape of contemporaries in the performance arts individuals like Laurie Anderson and Spaulding Gray were important in demonstrating how autobiographical material could be woven successfully into relevant social commentary.

⁵² PACE Bio for artist Fred Wilson. <http://www.pacegallery.com/artists/507/fred-wilson>

EDUCATION

University of Saint Joseph. Macau, Macau

Master's Degree in Spatial Design with honors "Summa cum Laude".

Brooklyn Cable Access Television. Brooklyn, N.Y.

Certificate program, Professional video production.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Cambridge, Massachusetts

Candidate in the Master of Science in Visual Studies program, Computer Graphics and programming, Video production.

Purchase College. Purchase, N.Y.

Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree 3D Design and Photography.

Fordham University. Bronx, N.Y.

Candidate in the Bachelor of Arts program, Biology, Math, and German language studies.

SELECT EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

2018 **NeoCon Light Camo Structure, the Shame and the Sorrow of May 14, 2018**
installation Art City Zhuhai. Zhuhai, China

2010 **Shake Up!** - Dam Stuhltrager Gallery. Brooklyn, N.Y.

2004 **Freizeit print series** – Hudson Guild. N.Y., N.Y.

Structures of Detention print series - Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn, N.Y.

2002 **Sackgasse /Dead End** - Galerie Völcker & Freunde. Berlin, Germany.

1999 **Collected Visions** - University Gallery at UMASS Lowell. Lowell, Massachusetts.

1993 **Private Parts exhibition** - Warehouse Galerie. Amsterdam, Netherlands.

1991 **The Berlin Project exhibition.** - Künstlerhaus Bethanien and Amerika Haus, Berlin, Germany.

1989 **The Waterline Project** - Artgarden. Amsterdam, the Netherlands

1987 **Sculpture: Special Projects** - MOMA /P.S.1. Long Island City, N.Y.

1983 **Zaroff's Tale** - Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. N.Y, N.Y. multi-media performance.

1981 **Sculpture exhibition** - Galerie Danielli. Toronto, Ontario Canada

1985 **Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall.** - Asia Society. N.Y., N.Y. performance with Mel Wong Dance Company.

Time Studies for Modern Dance - Video Image Invitational, Foundation Giorgio Ronchi Capri, Italy.

1981 **Meketra** - Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art. Ithaca, N.Y. sculpture installation.

Week of Performance Art: Laser Sculpture Dance at Herbert F. Johnson Museum. Ithaca, N.Y.

Studies for Zaroff's Tale. performance Mini-Para Perform Actions. Brooklyn, N.Y.

1976 **Models for Large Sculpture** - presented at Arnot Art Museum. Elmira, N.Y. Working

1975 **Untitled 1** - presented at Roy R. Neuberger Museum. Purchase, N.Y.

HONORS AND AWARDS

2017 Kur-World Cup Environmental Award for Architecture and Design,
Kur-World and Macau International Environmental Co-operation Forum. Macau, China.

2003 Award in Printmaking. N.Y. Foundation for the Arts

2002 Nomination. The Joan Mitchell Foundation award.

1998 Support grant. CBK Centrum Bildende Kunst, Rotterdam with Arnold Schalks.
The Netherlands Consul to North America

1989 Support grant. Netherland-America Foundation for The Waterline Project.

Support grant. The Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts.

Support grant. Art Matters Foundation for The Waterline Project.

Award in Sculpture. N.Y. Foundation for the Arts for The Waterline Project.

1985 Sponsored Projects. N.Y. State Council on the Arts, Individual Artist Program.

1984 Interdisciplinary Arts Program Award. National Endowment for the Arts with the Mel Wong Dance Company.

1982 Sponsored Projects. N.Y. State Council on the Arts, Individual Artist Program

1977-79 Expansion Arts Program Award. National Endowment for the Arts for my Festival Ithaca Projects.

1977 Award in Sculpture. Creative and Performing Arts Council of Cornell University

1976 Sculpture Award. The Ithaca Art Association.

TIMELINE

ex: = exhibition perf: = performance inst: = installations

born: Ft.Hood, Texas	1953	
family relocates to Hanau, Germany	1954	
sister born Hanau, Germany	1955	
	1956	
family returns to Bronx, NY	1957	
Mt. Carmel Elementary School-Bronx, NY	1958	
	1959	
	1960	
	1961	
	1962	
	1963	
	1964	
	1965	
graduate from Mt. Carmel / family relocates to Valhalla, NY	1966	
begin Valhalla High School	1967	High School studies included German
	1968	
	1969	
	1970	
St.Mary's in the Fields Art program / New York State Regents Scholarship, New York State Regents Board of Examiners educational award. Graduate Valhalla High School / begin Fordham Uni.	1971	begin creating oil paintings / and undertake study of photography with Lester Mahon. University studies: Biology, Math, Astromony, German and Roman History
leave Fordham Uni / begin study at SUNY Purchase / Mother's death	1972	
through SUNY Purchase meet artists and performers Carl Andre, Robert Motherwell, Richard Artschwager and Yvonne Rainer.	1973	Study sculpture with Tal Streeter, photography with John Cohen and printmaking with Antonio Frasconi
first trip to Europe and North Africa	1974	
graduate BFA SUNY Purchase / relocate to Ithaca, N.Y.	1975	begin work with tension-compression structures / Untitled One at the Roy R. Neuberger Museum. Purchase, NY
work at the Material Science & Engineering lab at Cornell Uni. / Sculpture Award, The Ithaca Art Association	1976	Art Cooperative studio Ithaca, NY Matrix at SUNY Purchase / solo ex: Models for Large Sculpture at Arnot Art Museum, Elmira, N.Y.
National Endowment for the Arts, Expansion Arts Program Award, with Festival Ithaca / Award in Sculpture from The Creative and Performing Arts Council of Cornell University. / meet artist Kenneth Snelson in his studio / Founder-Director of The Ithaca Art Cooperative and White Apple Gallery 1977 to 1979 Ithaca, NY / Begin Karate with Kathy Garrity White Belt July 2, 1977	1977	Altair-Ithaca, NY
collaboration with Art Corporation of America, in NYC	1978	first Andromedia experiments at the Ithaca Art Cooperative Ithaca, NY / ex: Selected Sculpture at Middendorf-Lane Gallery, Washington, D.C.
National Endowment for the Arts, Expansion Arts Program Award, with Festival Ithaca / meet Joseph Beuys-Guggenheim Museum NYC	1979	perf: Raw Data for Conversion Over Water-The Showing Room, NYC / perf: Cat's Cradle Event at Festival Ithaca-Ithaca, NY / ex: String Forms -Somerstown Gallery Somers, N.Y. / solo ex: Ron Rocco New Sculpture at Gallery Danielli in Toronto, Canada / Meketra Installation-Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Ithaca, NY / ex: Small Sculpture at IV Biennale Internazionale Dantesca, Ravenna, Italy. / The Altair Installation at The First Festival Ithaca, Ithaca, NY
return to NYC East 12st Manhattan / Awarded First Degree Brown Belt (Sho-dan) 9/2/1980	1980	
move to Mulberry Street, Manhattan	1981	perf: Laser Sculpture / Dance at The Fifth Floor Studio, NYC and as part of A Week of Performance Art at Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art in Ithaca, NY / perf: Mini-ParapPerform-Actions: Zaroff's Tale at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY
begin work at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Operations Dept and IT Collections management from 1982 to 1992 NYC / Experimental TV Center Owego, NY / New York State Council on the Arts, Sponsored Projects / Father's death	1982	
Relocate to Cambridge, MA to begin study at CAVS at Massachusetts Institute of Technology	1983	perf: Zaroff Tale - Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NYC / ETVc video works / String Form for Binding Nations presented at the Conference on Communication Technology and Traditional Cultures at The United Nations NYC / inst: Andromedia 1 at Center for Advanced Visual Study at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA
Leave MIT and return to NYC-Harrison Ave. studio / collaboration with the Mel Wong Dance Company / National Endowment for the Arts, Interdisciplinary Arts Program Award with Mel Wong / Consultant to Orin Riley Fine Art Restoration.	1984	Harrison Ave. Brooklyn studio
New York State Council on the Arts, Sponsored Projects, Individual Artist Program.	1985	perf: Buddha Meets Einstein at the Great Wall at The Asia Society, NYC / ex: Time Studies for Modern Dance video at The Video Image Invitational-Foundation Georgio Ronchi, Capri, Italy. / ex: The Artist and the Computer at The Bronx Museum of Art, Bronx, NY
collaboration with David Hykes and the Harmonic Choir	1986	ex: Time Studies for Modern Dance video at CAD/CAM International Exhibition of Computer Artforms, Kortijk, Belgium. / perf: The Visualization of Sound-Light Sphere with The Harmonic Choir at Cathedral of St.John the Divine, NYC
Guest Faculty, The Banff Center-Alberta, Canada	1987	Installation for the Visualization of Sound at The Banff Center, Alberta, Canada with David Hykes / ex: Sculpture-Special Projects at P.S.1 Museum of Modern Art, Long Is.City, N.Y. / ex: A Warning to My Friends at Brooklyn Art and Cultural Assoc., Brooklyn, NY
	1988	
marriage to Elizabeth Estabrook / Funding grants for The Waterline Project from: The Netherland-America Foundation The Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, Art Matters Foundation and New York Foundation for the Arts	1989	first European ex: The Waterline Project at Foundation ArtGarden Amsterdam, Netherlands / ex: NYFA Fellows: Sculpture at The University Art Gallery, S.U.N.Y. at Albany, NY
Founder /Director of Bernadette Salvage Fine Art Gallery from 1990 to 2003	1990	Horizon is Nothing More than the Limit of Our Sight at The Brooklyn Museum of Art-Brooklyn, NY / Project Commissions for The Washington State Art Council Art in Public Schools Program-Seattle, Washington / ex: The Technological Muse at The Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah, NY
artist-in-residence Kunsterhaus Bethanien Berlin, Germany	1991	solo exs: The Berlin Project at Kunsterhaus Bethanien and Amerika Haus, Berlin, Germany / ex: Exposição Internacional de Esculturas Efêmeras at Fundação Demócrito Rocha, Fortalesca, Brazil.
relocate to Kunst & Complex-Rotterdam, Netherlands	1992	ex: Aktuelle Strömungen at Galerie Schoen+Nalepa, Berlin, Germany.
return to NYC President St. Brooklyn / acquisition of my Berlin Project to the permanent collection of The Berlinische Galerie-Berlin, Germany	1993	Studio at Kunst & Complex, Rotterdam. solo ex: Private Parts at Warehouse Galerie, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

TIMELINE		ex: = exhibition perf: = performance inst: = installations
birth of daughter Madeline Estabrook Rocco / purchase Sackett St. home	1994	
Consultant to Amann-Estabrook Fine Art Conservation-NYC	1995	inst: Andromedia at ISEA95 Montreal, International Exhibition of Electronic Art-Montreal, Canada
appointed to the Board of Directors - for ASCI/Art and Science Collaborations. / Project Commission - NYC Metropolitan Transit Authority for LIRR Rail station at Long Beach, NY	1996	ex: Luminous Bodies at Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn, NY / ex: 25 years of Visual Arts at Purchase at Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY / ex: Reality Check: Cultural Questions and Political Commentaries at Sylvia White Gallery, NYC
Brooklyn Cable Access Television, study professional video production and produce programming for BCAT / Commissioned artist for the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail station at West Avenue-Jersey City, NJ / collaboration with Ricardo Dominguez on the theater-media work Rabinal Ache-Zapatista Port Action	1997	perf: media event Rabinal Ache -PORT/Navigating Digital Culture at The Herbert and Vera List Center at M.I.T. Cambridge, MA.
CBK Centrum Bildende Kunst, Support grant-Rotterdam and The Netherlands Consul to North America in collaboration with Arnold Schalks for Communicating Vessels	1998	ex: Communicating Vessels at Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island, NY with Arnold Schalks.
	1999	solo ex: Collected Visions at University of Massachusetts, Lowell, MA. / ex: Twenty-six American Artists at Campo & Campo, Antwerp, Belgium. / ex: Carriage Return -Junge Künstler zum Thema Computer, Kommunikation und Dynamik at Galerie Völcker & Freunde, Berlin, Germany.
First meeting with Louise Bourgeois at her home in Chelsea NYC	2000	finish video works The Berlin Diary, Plötzensee. / ex: Urban Nature at Islip Art Museum/Anthony Giordano Gallery, Islip, NY / ex: The Berlin Diary video at Galerie Völcker & Freunde, Berlin, Germany.
retire from the Board of Director - for ASCI/Art and Science Collaborations	2001	ex: Inaugural Invitational at Collaborative Concepts, Beacon, NY / ex: The Politics of Racism at ABC NO RIO and The Hudson Guild, NYC / ex: Pierogi 2000 Flatfiles at Block Artspace Kansas City, Missouri.
Awarded Third Degree Brown Belt (San-dan) 1/2002	2002	solo ex: Sackgasse /Dead End at Galerie Volcker & Freunde, Berlin, Germany.
Award in Printmaking. New York Foundation for the Arts / Awarded First Degree Black Belt (Sho-dan) 11/8/2003	2003	N6th Street Brooklyn studio
	2004	solo ex: Freizeit at Hudson Guild, NYC / solo ex: Structures of Detention at The Brooklyn Public Library /Business and Law Branch, Brooklyn, NY / ex: Digital and Beyond at Rockland Center for the Arts, W.Nyack, NY / ex: Scope -Galerie Völcker & Freunde NYC
	2005	Design Tsunami Memorial at Khao Lak - Lamru National Park at Council of Architects,Thailand / Tsunami Memorial Design Competition-Puket, Thailand
relocate to Berlin, Germany. German Cultural VISA - sponsored by Kunsterhaus Bethanien	2006	Wangel Str. Studio - Berlin, Germany ex: Among the Trees at Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ / ex: 25 years at Kunst & Complex, Rotterdam, Netherlands / ex: Crossings at Viktoriapark Breweri, Berlin, Germany / inst: StarBlind at Stone Quarry Hill Art Park, Cazanovia, NY
Divorce / Michelle Han	2007	ex: Amerika at Supermarkt 2.0, Berlin, Germany / ex: Bloody State at Berliner Liste -Galerie Völcker & Freunde Berlin, Germany / ex: works on paper at Artnews Projects -Pierogi Flatfiles. Berlin, Germany.
	2008	ex: Under the Umbrella at IPCNY /International Print Center, NYC / ex: Miami Postures at ArtForum -Pierogi Gallery Berlin, Germany / solo ex: Shipwrecked at Supermarkt 2.0, Berlin, Germany. / American Flag Camouflage at Berliner Liste -Wolfram Völcker Fine Art. Berlin, Germany / work included in Design Mai Berlin, Germany
return to NYC / second meeting with Louise Bourgeois at her home in Chelsea NYC	2009	POW Series, Autograph at Scope Art Fair-CTS Gallery. Miami, Florida / ex: Bloody State at TINA B. - The Prague Contemporary Art Festival. Prague, Czech Republic / ex: POW Series at Slick Paris Art Fair /CTS Gallery. Paris, France / ex: Bail Out installation at BOFFO - Object Affection Exhibition. Brooklyn, NY / inst: Bloody State at Scope Art Fair -CTS Gallery. Basel, Switzerland
final residence Experimental TV Center Owego, NY / break with Michelle	2010	solo ex: ShakeUp! Installation at CTS /Dam Stuhltrager Gallery Brooklyn, NY
relocate to Lang Qing Ju apartment-Zhuhai, China	2011	Zhuhai, China
	2012	
move to Meiliwan apartment-Zhuhai, China / begin studies at Uni.St.Joseph Macau	2013	
	2014	begin collaborations with Josh Wu of L.A.S archistudio, for the design of the Contemporary Music Institute of Zhuhai
Master Degree-Uni.St.Joseph Macau / purchase Zhuhai home	2015	Design G Flower showroom with L.A.S archistudio, Zhuhai, China
	2016	Design Chengchuan Art Gallery of Beishan Village with L.A.S archistudio-Zhuhai, China
Kur-World Cup Environmental Award for Architecture and Design, Excellence Award for Container Architecture / presentation: Introducing My Muse TEDx Zhuhai, China.	2017	
	2018	first exhibition in Asia, inst: NeoCon Light Camo Structure, the Shame and the Sorrow of May 14, 2018 as part of Art City -Summer Art Week-Zhuhai, China
ex: Made in Zhuhai. Zhuhai, China	2019	The Purr of the Chinese Shoe Factory / 中国鞋厂的隆隆声 artwork commissioned for the Longyuan Footwear Company at their Highland Shoe Factory.
	2020	

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